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Always the Backbone, Rarely the Leaders: Young Black Women
Activists and the Reconceptualization of Respectability during the Nashville
Sit-in Movement



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The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
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Cover Photo:

Mayor Ben West agrees that lunch counters should be desegregated after questioning by Diane Nash [right], 19 April 1960. *Nashville Banner*. Photo by Vic Cooley (Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).

Introduction

“You know, I sat-in yesterday,” Frankie Keeling told Nellie Hall as they walked to campus on the morning of February 14, 1960.

“No!” Nellie replied in astonishment.

“We were all downtown at the lunch counter, sittin’in, and they need some more people,” continued Frankie.

“Oh?” said Nellie, pondering Frankie’s words.

“Some man put a cigarette out on my arm,” Frankie added.

Suddenly Nellie’s hesitation disappeared. Clearly infuriated, Nellie responded, “How could somebody be so mean and cruel? Frankie, if you strong and take this abuse, I have to go down and be a part of it too.”¹

Nellie Hall was true to her word and on February 18, the day of the second sit-in attempting to desegregate Nashville’s lunch counters, she followed Frankie Keeling to Capital Hill First Baptist Church. The two young women, both juniors at Tennessee State A&I, best friends, and life-long Nashville residents, joined over five-hundred other students, predominately from Nashville’s four historically black colleges. At the church, the students were reminded once more of the principles of nonviolence they had been trained to practice and then, they caught their ride to the sit-in sites. Nellie and Frankie, along with numerous other young black women and men, took turns sitting-in at various segregated lunch counters throughout the city. Despite suffering stinging verbal abusive, cigarette burns, pulled hair, punches, slaps, and food poured on their heads and clothes by angry whites, no students moved. No students struck back, and no students, including Nellie and Frankie, opened their mouths to combat any insults. Through nonviolent protest, black students in the early months of 1960 were determined to end

segregation in their hometown. Originally participating in the movement to support her good friend, Nellie Hall would later say about her experiences: “All we was thinking about [was] changing the Establishment--the commerce of the city, and to let people know we as young people was going to stand up and not take this mess any longer.”²

The enthusiastic participation of Nellie, Frankie, and hundreds of other young black women participants in Nashville’s sit-in movement represents a reconceptualization of respectable “racial uplift”³ work in the early 1960s. Advocating respectable middle-class values, thus combating negative stereotypes of black men and women, was an important tactic of race workers since the days of slavery.⁴ Respectability remained an important discourse in the battle for civil rights as the sit-in movement began, yet it shifted as black women stepped into the public spotlight alongside black men in ways that their foremothers would never had deemed proper. Though equally as active participants as black men, black women in the 1950s participated in race work by means of activities African Americans, like most Americans in that era, had defined as falling within women’s domain, such as improving the situation of black women and children and supporting men’s organizations. Due to emphasis on publicly demonstrating adherence to the respectable nuclear patriarchal family, which strictly divided the roles of men and women within the household, gender also determined the form of racial uplift activities one participated in before the sit-in movement began.

Young black college women in the early 1960s were raised in an era of high expectations-- yet increasingly disappointing results. Black lawyers began to win court cases in favor of school desegregation but most cities, like Nashville, were slow to actually integrate. Discontented with their parents’ progress and encouraged by the more egalitarian setting they discovered in academia, black college women joined the sit-in movement and participated in the

same new radical protest activities as college men. Young black women who joined the public demonstrations felt a sense of entitlement and urgency everyone recognized as a new phenomenon, yet the different form of women's activities exposed a generational divide. Older members of Nashville's black community, including the students' parents, were especially apprehensive about college students' new activities.

Most of the students' parents had agreed with and supported race leaders in the early 1950s who counseled "respectable Christian women" to "sacrifice for their men" by allowing men to assume the manly position of leader which Jim Crow laws denied them. A decade later, however, African American women, no longer wished to remain on the sidelines. Black college women did not reject traditional views about the importance of respectability, religious faith, and racial uplift, but now they felt they needed to sacrifice for their community by braving racial violence by men's side. Though continuing to utilize familiar rhetoric, the implied actions stemming from the words changed. No longer did "respectable Christian women" step aside and let men take charge. Instead "respectable Christian women" took aggressive, public action alongside men in the fight for equality. By situating the students' in a familiar, though broader context of respectability, Nashville's race leaders not only won the backing of a large portion of the black community, but they successfully shifted the discourse of respectable racial uplift work in a manner that allowed women to emerge as leaders, organizers and more equal participants in the civil rights movement.

Nashville's Story

On January 10, 1957 Rev. Kelly Miller Smith drove to Atlanta, Georgia to meet with civil rights leaders from across the South. A highly accomplished man and only thirty years old,

Smith was minister of Nashville's Capital Hill First Baptist Church, the largest black church in the city and home to the local NAACP chapter of which he was president. He received a personal invitation to the Atlanta conference where southern civil rights leaders planned to discuss the implications of the Montgomery Bus Boycott which lasted from December 5, 1955 to December 20, 1956, beginning after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. Attracting leaders such as Martin Luther King, Ralph D. Abernathy, Ella Baker, T. J. Jemison, Stanley Levison, Joseph Lowery, Bayard Rustin, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, and C. K. Steele, the group established the Negro Leadership Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration, soon renamed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The use of nonviolent resistance was the organization's guiding principle. SCLC leadership encouraged each person in attendance to establish a local branch of the new organization in their hometown.⁵

Smith imagined Nashville, Tennessee would be especially receptive to the new SCLC branch. Nashville's unique position as a center of learning and prosperity for African Americans, yet also a community with deeply entrenched Jim Crow laws, made Nashville a especially suited to southern civil rights activism. Home to four prestigious black universities, Nashville drew elite blacks from all over the country. Within the city stood Fisk University, then a black private college with a distinguished history; Meharry Medical College; Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College, or A&I as it was then known, which was the largest black school in the state; and American Baptist College, a small, deeply impoverished black seminary. Nashville boasted a large middle-class black community, an active NAACP chapter (established in 1919), numerous black social organizations, and relatively less harsh Jim Crow laws than in the Deep South. By the early 1950s Nashville also included a thriving black business district on Jefferson Avenue in

suburban North Nashville, three religious publishing houses, and three weekly black newspapers.⁶

Once back in Nashville from the Atlanta Conference, Rev. Kelly Miller Smith sent letters to all the city's black church leaders urging them to attend a meeting held January 18, 1957 to organize the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference. At the meeting, the group agreed upon regular meeting times and, armed with a staff of officers representing several of the major religious dominations in the city, the NCLC began to formulate a strategy for racial uplift while "operating within the contexts of the Christian faith."⁷ When Kelly Miller Smith held the first meeting of the NCLC in 1957, two representatives of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), Glenn Smiley and James M. Lawson, Jr., who were visiting friends in Nashville upon returning from the Atlanta Conference, heard about the meeting and became interested in the fledgling organization. They offered their services in setting up permanent community workshops on nonviolent demonstration and practices. Because Lawson was currently in divinity school at Oberlin College in Ohio, the starting date had to be postponed until Lawson could arrange to transfer to Vanderbilt University in Nashville to finish his degree. Not viewing Lawson's workshops as a top priority--or having unanimous NCLC agreement on the benefits of Lawson's work-- Kelly Miller Smith personally accepted Lawson's proposal, and the first workshop was planned for March 26-28, 1958.⁸

The fledgling organization was relatively dormant in its first year of operation. During the NCLC's early months, only ministers were invited to attend due to SCLC's desire to be a network of church leaders. Not until one year later according to the NCLC's own documentation, did the NCLC realized "the group could do its most effective work by including laymen among its members." Yet even after others were encouraged to join, Kelly Miller Smith admitted no real

community awareness or excitement surrounding the NCLC. Smith wrote, “Many people saw the organization as a rival to the NAACP, and the vast majority of the citizens were simply not interested in a new organization in an already over-organized town.”⁹ The group met only sporadically. Most black Nashvillians were more interested in the NAACP. In early 1958, the NCLC cosponsored a voter registration campaign alongside NAACP workers, but not until Lawson’s return in March 1958 did the NCLC’s activities begin to achieve its own unique focus.¹⁰

James Lawson, while a freshman at Baldwin Wallace College in Berea, Ohio, joined FOR, an organization founded by A.J. Muste, and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), an affiliate of FOR. Both FOR and CORE advocated nonviolent resistance to racism. CORE conducted sit-ins in some northern cities in the late 1940s and embarked on a freedom ride more than a decade before the more famous ones of the early 1960s.¹¹ Consistent with the principles of nonviolence, Lawson declared himself a conscientious objector and refused to report for the draft in 1951. He served fourteen months in prison after refusing to take either a student or ministerial deferment. After his release from prison, Lawson went as a Methodist missionary to Nagpur, India, where he studied satyagraha, the principles of nonviolence resistance that Mahatma Gandhi and his followers developed. He returned to the United States in 1955, entering the Graduate School of Theology at Oberlin College in Ohio until he transferred to Vanderbilt in 1958 and began conducting workshops.

Lawson immediately headed to Nashville’s black college campuses to recruit participants for his non-violent workshops. The young Lawson made a concerted effort to reach out to the college students around the Nashville area, even moving the workshops to the basement of the Clark Memorial Methodist Church near Jefferson Street to better accommodate college students

at nearby Fisk and Tennessee State Universities.¹² Lawson knew that campus attitudes were changing. Only eight students showed-up to Lawson's first class which Kelly Miller Smith announced during the service at his First Baptist Church. One of the students attending was John R. Lewis, then a sophomore at American Baptist Seminary. He recalls, "I could see that there was something special about this man [Lawson]. He just had a way about him, an aura of inner peace and wisdom that you could sense immediately upon seeing him. He was tall, bespectacled, and barely thirty."¹³ Lawson told the students that he came into the South to join in "indicting the people of the South who are mistreating us and visiting violence upon us and trying in every desperate and despicable way to deny us the dignity and the rights that belong to every human being ... Our governmental system is on trial. Is this the land of the free, or only the land of the white free?"¹⁴ Though regular attendance in Lawson's workshop was generally not very high, Lawson's room at Kelly Miller Smith's Baptist Church was never empty.

During Lawson's workshops students would discuss the philosophy of nonviolent protest and participated in role-playing which mimicked the cruelty students might face while sitting-in. A group of students pretended to sit at the lunch counter while another group of students pretended to physically and verbally abused them. By acting out potentially violent and threatening situations, they could practice the nonviolent principles Lawson taught as well as learn to control their anger and desire to retaliate. Both men and women prepared to face real violence during sit-ins in the same manner. Students were taught not to strike back or curse if abused, not to laugh out loud, not to hold conversations with floor workers, not to leave one's seat until the leader gave permission to do so, and not to block entrances to stores or the aisles inside the stores. Lawson told the trainees to be friendly and courteous at all times, to always sit straight and face the counter, to report all serious incidents to the leader, to refer information

seekers to the leader in a polite manner, and to maintain eye contact with any assailant. Most importantly, they were told to always remember the teachings of Jesus Christ, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr.¹⁵

Lawson's message spoke loud and clear to the students. They recognized Lawson as someone radically different from the NAACP leaders who previously dictated racial uplift doctrine in the Nashville community. Angeline Butler, a Fisk University student in regular attendance, recalled that "He talked about how what we [black citizens] had been doing wasn't working and it is time for something new. He wasn't just talking about it, he was doing it."¹⁶ Lawson, with his more radical thoughts concerning civil rights, brought a completely new interpretation of racial uplift philosophy to the students in Nashville that immediately appealed to university students already engaged in conversations about race and politics in their classroom. Lawson's emphasis on immediate action also appealed to the students who were becoming increasingly disenchanted with the slow process their parents' organizations were making. Even the voter-registration campaigns started by the new and more progressive Nashville Christian Leadership Conferences seemed to be moving very slowly. Lawson wanted to put a stop to Jim Crow now as opposed to working through the slow legal system to accomplish the task.

The college students attending Lawson's workshops refused to wait any longer. In October 1959, the thirty-six students who regularly attended Lawson's workshops became the Nashville Student Movement (NSM), an affiliate, though separate from, the NCLC. Unlike the NAACP and adult-run civil rights organizations, Lawson advocated group leadership that rotated often. An executive committee of thirteen students served as leadership and, breaking from tradition, six were women.¹⁷ Soon after the executive board was created, students became eager

to transform their studies into “test protest demonstrations.” Groups of four to six students, composed of both men and women, were sent to various lunch counters around the town on two separate occasions: one on November 28, 1959 and the other on December 5, 1959. The students did not encounter violence on either occasion, and the groups left as soon as they were denied service. Media coverage of the events was completely negligible. With the recent violence associated with school integration fresh in everyone’s minds, no one outside Lawson’s small circle, including black newspapers, wanted to stir-up trouble in Nashville’s peaceful community.¹⁸ The Nashville Student Movement and the NCLC still lay unnoticed. But in only two months, things would be drastically different.

On February 1, 1960 four freshmen in Greensboro, North Carolina lead a sit-in at a local Woolworth’s store.¹⁹ Afterwards, sit-ins began erupting all over North Carolina, and on Friday February 12, 1960, Lawson presided over the first mass meeting of the Nashville sit-in movement. Word spread so fast on black college campuses that approximately five-hundred new enthusiastic student volunteers lined the halls in Kelly Miller Smith’s Capital Hill First Baptist Church to accompany the thirty-six veterans of Lawson’s nonviolent workshops.²⁰

Adult NAACP and NCLC members were anything but on board with the students’ plans to demonstrate. Slightly overwhelmed by the students and perhaps never anticipating sit-ins would actually take place in Nashville, the adult race leaders argued for a delay based on the fact that the NCLC only had approximately \$100 in funds, certainly not enough to bail all the students out of jail. Determined that the only way to succeed was on the principle of “jail with no bail,” the students vehemently protested the adults’ apprehensions. Smith, in his personal narrative of the movement, claimed that the students backed the adults into a corner. “There wasn’t a question of is it going to happen,” he writes, “The question is, are you going to be a part

of it?”²¹ The students ignored the adults’ pleas and chose to stage a sit-in the following morning. Lawson found himself teaching nonviolent workshops late into the night. He told the crowd how to behave in the face of possible emergencies, how to avoid violating the loitering laws, how to move to and from lunch counters in orderly shifts, how to fill the seats of students who needed to go to the bathroom, even how to dress: stockings and heels for women, coats and ties for men.²²

Slightly angered by the Greensboro Four beating them to staging the first sit-in, the NSM was determined to establish themselves as the most disciplined, organized and persistent of the nonviolent action groups in the South.²³ For the next three months beginning on February 13, the Nashville Student Movement showed their determination and launched a series of sit-ins attempting to integrate Nashville’s lunch counters.²⁴ On February 13, church vans traveled a circuit between the Capital Hill First Baptist Church and designated pickup spots near Nashville’s four black colleges. Once everyone assembled at the staging area, Lawson moved the five-hundred-student strong crowd out to the sit-in site. Leadership planned for nine students at a time to sit at the lunch counters and to be replaced every time they had to stand-up. On February 18, 20 and 27, students split into groups and attempted to integrate various lunch counters, restaurants and public facilities. By the end of the month, some stores began removing their seats and closing doors before students could begin demonstrations, yet the students’ demands were finally heard across the city.²⁵ The sit-ins continued in Nashville February through May 1960 with intervals of increased and lessened action depending on the local government’s reactions, yet the number of student participants only increased as the days passed.

Sitting right beside men at the lunch counters and serving on the NSM Executive Board, women were major participants in Nashville’s sit-in struggle. Women were burned with cigarette butts, pushed, shoved, squirted with ketchup and mustard and insulted by angry white mobs, but

they continued to participate in the movement. Many young college women defied parents and family members' wishes. Nellie Hall's father warned her not to participate because going to jail would permanently ruin her respectable reputation. Hall says:

"I didn't want mom and daddy to know, because if Daddy knew that, he would just--he would go ballistic. So, you know--and then it got to a point where I said, 'I don't care if he do find out.' But I--I was careful more than Tealle [her brother] I couldn't--I didn't go to jail because he'd always told me, 'Do not call this number if you go to jail.'"²⁶

Hall was not the only one that experienced such threats from her family. Catherine Brook's brothers told her she should not go down to the lunch counters because "she was a girl and would get hurt."²⁷ Eleanor Chippey-Grier's parents told her, "They whole-heartedly disapproved of girls behaving 'like that' in public."²⁸ With jobs on the line, memories of much worse times, and an adherence to age-old conceptions of middle-class respectability, parents were extremely apprehensive about letting their female children participate in these radical new activities. Despite warnings, women still participated in large numbers. Women braved their parents' disapproval and were subject to the same violence as black college men.

One of the most active women in the movement was Fisk University junior, Diane Nash. Born in Chicago's South Side to middle-class parents and raised Catholic, Diane studied at Howard University between secretarial jobs before transferring to Fisk University in 1959. Fed up with Jim Crow, upon her arrival in Nashville she was quick to accept the invitation when Paul LaPrad, a white exchange student Nash met at Fisk's International House, invited her to attend one of Lawson's nonviolent workshops.²⁹ Nash, one of the strongest and most outspoken leaders in the Nashville sit-in movement, quickly gained the admiration of her fellow students and sat on the NSM Executive Board beginning in 1959 and was made head of the central committee by January 1960.

On February 19, 1960 Mayor Ben West of Nashville sent out a warning to the NCLC leaders stating that any sit-ins would lead to arrest. The mayor was certainly true to his word. Paddy wagons lined the streets and students were piled, sometimes violently, into the cars and taken to the jail where they were then crammed into small cells. All were found guilty of obstructing commerce.³⁰ Not wanting to see black students in jails, the black Nashville community had been raising funds for the students' bail money since the first sit-in began on February 13 and enough money was saved for all the students to be set free. Z. Alexander Looby, a prestigious local black lawyer and NAACP leader, petitioned the judge to reduce the fine for each demonstrator from one hundred to just five dollars. The judge, who wanted to see the students and the bad publicity for the city off his hands, agreed.³¹ Despite this fact, Diane Nash, unprovoked by anyone, stood up in the courtroom and argued in front of the judge that to pay the fines would contribute to the "injustices already heaped upon the Negro citizen." After Nash's courageous speech, eighty-one students refused to pay the fines and stayed in jail. Thirty-four of those students were women.³² These young black women, who in the eyes of their largely middle-class parents were supposed to exude respectability at all times, be quiet and modest, and let black men serve as their leaders and protectors, sat in the county jail.

Even leaders who were initially supportive grew weary of the students' activities and their insistence on not resting until the entire community desegregated. In March of 1960, not long after the demonstrations began, Mayor Ben West called on the NSM and the NCLC to cease the sit-ins upon the creation of a biracial negotiation committee, consisting of adult black civil rights leaders and white businessmen. The committee intended to agree on a solution to the problem of segregation in the Nashville community and thus eliminate the need for the continuation of the sit-ins.³³ Along with two other NAACP leaders, Rev. Smith served on the

committee. After much deliberation, the group decided to divide the lunch counters, serving blacks on one side and whites on the other in some restaurants, and desegregate other lunch counters on a “trial basis,” a plan which closely resembled failed attempts to integrate schools. The students, led by Diane Nash, flatly refused the committee’s proposal and staged sit-ins once again.³⁴

Clashing Concepts of Respectability

Adults, especially older women, had a great deal of concern about students’ role in the sit-in movement. The behavior of the young students in the name of racial uplift clashed with adults’ conception of proper etiquette, and parents worried that the students’ reputation as respectable members of the black community would diminish if their activities continued. Parents advised their children not to participate, and they refused to drive students to the sit-in sites or publicly demonstrate. Others sent Rev. Smith letters, recommending young women in the sit-in movement be a part of classes teaching social graces to remind them of what it means to be a respectable women. Dorothy Brody, one of the Capital Hill First Baptist Church’s congregation members wrote:

“Success will follow once they [young women in the civil rights movement] realize that everyone outside their home expects them to act properly and that nobody but nobody will want to sit beside them, eat with them or attend school with them regardless of their color unless they’re respectable.”³⁵

Another woman writes, “We are fighting to end second class citizenship, let’s also end second and third class attempts at morale manner and social graces.”³⁶ When Rev. Smith recounted his most memorable moment at the sit-in site, he had spotted one of the male participants who was having trouble holding up his torn trousers; Smith desperately wanted to find him a belt.³⁷

Parents in particular became even more apprehensive about the movement when the Vanderbilt Divinity School Board of Trustees voted to expel James Lawson on March 3, 1960. Then, to make matters worse, on March 4 word reached Lawson that city policemen had a warrant for his arrest. Lawson headed to the Capital Hill First Baptist Church, deciding that they would have to arrest him there. The white policemen entered the church, bound Lawson, and escorted him towards the police vehicle.³⁸ Lawson, who regularly criticized NAACP work, articulated the major threat to Nashville's race establishment. Lawson castigated the NAACP for being timid and using conventional efforts to deal with a "radical social evil." In a speech given in April 1960, Lawson said that "the issues are not integration... If progress [of integration] has not been at a genuine pace, it is often because the major groups seeking equal rights tactically made desegregation the end and not the means."³⁹ Now, however, his radical words and actions resulted in school suspension and a jail sentence.

Lawson's suspension confirmed the older generation's fears and surely reverberated loudly in the black community. Parents feared students participating in sit-ins would not only disgrace themselves and their families by flaunting rules of gendered behavior in public, but they would also lose the ability to attend college. Like other socially marginalized groups that valued education as a means by which their children could enter mainstream America, middle class black families believed that education could lead to mobility. Unfortunately, segregation laws often closed that path to all but a few of the "upper tenth." Education had always been tied to upward mobility and middle-class status in the black community, and parents worked hard and prided themselves on their children's ability to receive a higher education. Parents vividly remembered a time where higher education was an opportunity reserved only for children from the most elite families. Many parents came of college age during depression when money was

much tighter and when segregation and poor primary education prevented students' entrance into college. Also, in the mid 1940s, as the activists' fathers returned from World War II, many hoped to utilize G.I. Bills to go to college. Unfortunately, the implementation and granting of this bill was left to the discretion of states instead of the federal government, thus allowing the Bill to be subject to racial discrimination.⁴⁰ With men understood as the leaders of the home and holders of higher paying jobs, families called upon black women to be the first to give up dreams of higher education. That legacy may have lingered with older black women, who were particularly distressed as they watched the younger generation of black women, who seemed more intent on being seen in public than on completing their degree and working toward the opportunities it offered.

The lack of Nashville's adult black community's support did not stem from their satisfaction with Jim Crow or acceptance of their position as second class citizens--older blacks just had a different conception of race work and respectability than the younger generation. The activities of uplift organizations in the 1950s clearly demonstrate the generational divide. Before sit-ins or cross-generational demands for equality and desegregation began, prominent black men in the 1950s represented Nashville's black community through organizations like the NAACP and used the courts to try and achieve equality. Black male professors and administrators from the four universities as well as male lawyers, doctors, dentists, businessmen, and principals from within the black community comprised much of the NAACP membership, including Z. Alexander Looby, the lawyer recently rebuffed by Diane Nash's call for jail instead of bail.⁴¹ Prestigious local adult black men, usually highly-educated lawyers or college educators, coordinated the plans of action and strategies of the organization.⁴² The leadership of the

Nashville NAACP consisted of four officers (president, vice president, secretary, and treasure) and a ten-member board of directors. Each year from 1956-1960, Rev. Kelly Miller Smith served as the president and allowed his church to serve as headquarters. The prestige of the men's jobs identifies them as leaders in the black community and certainly as middle, if not upper, class citizens.

Women played only a supporting role in the NAACP. In contrast to males, only two women served terms on the executive board from 1956-1960 and for only one year each. One was the wife of Z. Alexander Looby.⁴³ Perhaps the other woman serving on the NAACP board was also the wife of a well-known black Nashvillian. Though only a few women were NAACP leaders, women were regular members of the organization in the 1950s. The Nashville NAACP roster in 1958, for example, indicated females comprised twenty-seven percent of the membership.⁴⁴ Wives of black men who were well-established within the community were generally also the members of the Nashville NAACP. Of the women listed in the NAACP membership roster in 1958, ninety-four percent of the women were married.⁴⁵ Yet black women's activities within the organization in the 1950s consisted of assisting the largely male-run organization by holding fundraisers, taking notes, completing secretarial duties, staffing voter registration tables, and making sure no meeting went without snacks.⁴⁶ In the 1950s, women actively participated in racial uplift in Nashville, but the roles of men and women were different.

Always the backbone, rarely the leaders, the NAACP would not have functioned as smoothly without the numerous black women devoted to racial uplift, but records make it clear that black NAACP leaders saw women's most important position as that of supporter of the "more widely-discriminated against" black male. Women's organizations such as the United

Church Women, the National Council of Negro Women, and the YWCA did offer opportunities for black women to serve in leadership positions while campaigning for civil rights but, like most American Organizations in the 1950s, their activities focused on traditional women's concerns, such as the home and family.⁴⁷ These women's organizations often hosted or raised money to sponsor conferences where male civil rights leaders would have the opportunity to speak.⁴⁸ Black women's organizations were most outspoken during fights to integrate elementary and high schools yet, even then, black women's clubs generally only issued a statement of support for the black men's actions.⁴⁹ Even though brave women who escorted their young children and black high school women faced angry protestors at newly integrated schools, they were not included in the NAACP planning process.

The very strategy implemented in the early twentieth century limited women's leadership potential within the NAACP, the most active civil rights organization for all blacks in the 1950s. In the mid-1930s the organization decided the strategy they would implement was to push forward cases in civil courts, specifically dealing with desegregation of education as an attempt to gain civil rights.⁵⁰ Legal pressure remained the main tactic of the civil rights movement until the sit-in movement began in the early 1960s. Historian Cynthia Fleming noted, the NAACP's choice to fight for education through legal means tells us much about the mindset of the organized black community at the time. First, fighting for school desegregation, which began with the desegregation of *higher* education, alludes to the elite class status and male gender of the NAACP leaders. To appreciate the NAACP achievements, blacks would have already had to be privileged. Instead of demanding unequivocal equal rights for all, black community leaders chose to fight to open up avenues, such as education, that would allow African-Americans, especially males, equal opportunities as whites to pursue and achieve middle-class status.⁵¹

Choosing to work for racial uplift through the legal system not only alludes to the elite status of the leadership but it demonstrates the great faith black leaders had in American democracy and in their status as citizens fully entitled to the rights that white Americans enjoyed, including the protection offered by the legal system. Though black race leaders challenged Jim Crow, they certainly did not challenge the legal system itself. Black Nashvillians unquestionably played by America's respectable rules. Black Women, like most women in this era, were excluded from professions like law, academia, business ownership, and the ministry, so they focused instead on church participation and club activities. Thus, their leadership abilities were often circumscribed by gendered, social inequality.

The strict separation of women and men's racial uplift work, with men serving as leaders and women as assistants, along with strict adherence to the ideals of "self-help, temperance, thrift, social purity, and the patriarchal family" were key characteristics of middle-class respectability within the 1950s black community.⁵² Demonstration of these attributes, along with access to higher education and, for men, a successful career, made a black citizen qualify to be a potential race leader. Though certainly adherence to this ideology could be used as a way of situating blacks' demands for and "deservedness" of equality within an ideological framework white Americans might recognize and respect, middle-class respectability cannot be viewed as strictly a white manifestation with which black citizens attempted to mimic.⁵³ Instead, middle-class black communities had, after the abolition of slavery, actively created their own identities, choosing to place the American values of respectability at the center.⁵⁴ Economic class, often more than race, shaped the way black Nashvillians' thought about themselves and their ability to help better their race's situation. Eleanor Chipper-Grier, daughter of a prominent race leader in the 1950s explained the middle-class mentality about race work prior the sit-ins:

“Most education men during the time were Civil Rights people who worked. Because if they didn’t, who would? You had a lot of people who were for the Cause and knew what they wanted to do, but didn’t know how to do it. So these are the people that showed them how to do what they had to do, because they had good brains. It’s just that they didn’t have the know-how. And so you had to use people who were educated to help you get to where you wanted to go. And that was how it started.”⁵⁵

Black Nashvillians put their educated “respectable” men forward as an elite class able to guide and improve the lives of their entire community. Race, class and gender were significant determinants of who became a leader and in what contexts others participated in the movement.

Strict adherence to patriarchal gender norms was an important part of respectability. Though male-leadership was certainly considered to be a positive quality within the black community, depictions of black society as brimming with sexual immorality, family disorganization, and domination by overbearing women made demonstrating patriarchal gender norms especially important--not only to disprove whites, but to instill pride within the black community. Elite blacks were particularly angered by these stereotypes, seeing themselves as especially deserving of respect due to their accomplishments in higher education and by their professions, achievements made dearer by the obstacles that Jim Crow placed in their way. The male-dominated gender politics of uplift posed difficulties for black women attempting to lead both black men and women in the early to mid- twentieth century. The defensive preoccupation with conformity to Victorian patriarchal conventions had long militated against the political protest waged by black women leaders in the interest of all black people--most clearly demonstrated in black ministers’ opposition to Ida B. Well’s antilynching campaign.⁵⁶

Furthermore, in a decade when any domestic conflict was considered “un-American,” the older blacks viewed any criticism of women’s position in the home and subordinate position in general to black men as divisive and detracting from the larger issue of racial inequality. In many ways, this male orientation affected how black oppression was theorized, emphasizing the victimization

of black men through lynching, economic exclusion, and public embarrassment and silencing the particular ways black women experienced racism.⁵⁷

Nothing is more telling about the way NAACP men viewed respectable women race-leaders than Rev. Kelly Miller Smith's eulogy in January 1960 delivered upon the death of Nannie Helen Burroughs, the dynamic force behind the Woman's Convention of the National Baptist Convention. Just in her first year Burroughs reported laboring 365 days, traveling 22 of them, delivering 215 speeches, organizing 12 women's societies, receiving 2,820 letters, and writing 9,235.⁵⁸ However, instead of praising her hard work, leadership abilities and dedication, Rev. Smith emphasized Burroughs' "puritanical and moralistic" qualities. He makes note that the pamphlets sent out to women interested in her activities stated, "We do not accept women who smoke, drink, wear slacks, use unbecoming language, or are morally lax." Smith also praises her encouragement of modesty among the female students of the school she founded (of which he speaks very little). Smith spends more time emphasizing the moral qualities of Nannie Burroughs and praising the National Baptist Convention than he does focusing on Burroughs' amazing life and contributions to fellow black women.⁵⁹

Half of the pages of Rev. Smith's speech are devoted to Burroughs and the rest tellingly analyzes the position of black women as race leaders. Smith writes:

"Black women have been given a favored spot by white men for a long time. The black male has suffered most because of racial discrimination. I know many instances in Mississippi where black women were living with white men as man and wife-- without benefit of marriage license. I know of but one or two instances where black men have lived with white women as man and wife. This means that whites have tended to recognize black women as leaders before they have been willing to recognize black men as leaders. ... Many black women have seen this and have insisted that black men be their leaders and they would fulfill the supportive roles... Though when blacks have selected their leaders, they have been both men male and female."⁶⁰

Interestingly, Smith comments illustrate how the older black leadership perceived gender discrimination as a product of racism directed against black men. Reflecting the middle-class value symbolized by the ability of the husband to be the sole supporter of his family, he implies allowing men to lead is a black woman's duty as the more privileged gender. In a perfect, racism-free world, blacks would choose both males and females as leaders, but in order for men to achieve their rightful, respectable, masculine leadership positions, women must step aside. He goes on to vaguely concede that, "There are times when a woman is in possession of such outstanding leadership abilities that, wherever she is, she becomes a leader-- with or without effort." To Rev. Smith, Burroughs was one of that type, though, it probably did not hurt that she was in charge of a strictly female organization.

Though economic class and gender did determine a person's ability to be a race leader, adherence to the particular 1950s ideology of respectability was not restricted to the black middle-class. As African Americans demonstrated, many of the characteristics of respectability were not contingent on income, and even less wealthy blacks often saw themselves as adherents to these middle-class values. Even though racism, poverty and myriad forms of discrimination made it difficult for blacks to fully realize the presumed benefits of adherence to these ideals (such as monetary success and upward mobility), they nonetheless retained a powerful psychological force within a mass black consciousness. Though poorer black adults' reluctance to participate in the sit-in movement is often contributed to fear of losing a job, they also supported the same ideas of respectability that prevented elites from showing their support. Shared ideas of respectability and a longstanding belief in its political and social efficacy provided a link between diverse sections of the black community.⁶¹

The widespread importance of respectability throughout the black community is especially noticeable in the Nashville community's leading black newspaper, *The Nashville Globe*. The *Globe* circulated to an average of 20,000 black citizens in the Nashville region between 1950 and 1960 when its last edition printed. Approximately 73% of the black community received the paper making it the most widely circulated black newspaper in the state of Tennessee. Founded in 1906, the *Nashville Globe* promoted self-reliance and racial solidarity as the best means for Nashville's African American community to succeed and prosper within the confines of the Jim Crow South. Richard H. Boyd, secretary of the National Baptist Publishing Board, originally financed the newspaper, and his son, Henry A. Boyd, who remained in charge of the paper until 1960, controlled the editorial content. The Boyds, long-time Nashville residents, had extensive contacts within Nashville's black middle class, which made it easier to gain advertisers and readers, as well as to define the content of their publication material.⁶²

In their message of uplift, the *Globe's* editors attempted to infuse their readers with notions of self-help and individual responsibility, as well as to celebrate and emphasize the achievements of Nashville's respectable black citizens. The newspaper embraced the self-help message of Booker T. Washington and W.E. B Du Bois but, at the same time, civil rights activities were clearly not the central focus of the newspaper. In line with 1950s uplift doctrine, the vast majority of the *Globe's* pages promoted the patronage of black owner businesses, advertised church activities, and recognized the achievements of black students, both academic and athletic. Even the post 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* school desegregation attempts did not always take center stage. Most reports consisted of lawyers' actions, and the support of the community was rarely solicited. NAACP meetings were advertised, yet respectable

achievements within the black community remained the central focus of the paper. The *Nashville Globe* was a means of fighting Jim Crow by uniting disparate groups within Nashville around shared values and ideas, as well as empowering the black community by publicizing and praising its achievement. The rhetoric, however, clashed with the direct action of the 1960s sit-in movement. As a result of the generational shift, the *Globe's* influence declined quickly and stopped publishing in 1960, shortly after Henry A. Boyd's death.⁶³

In a typical nine-page edition of the *Nashville Globe*, two entire pages list blacks' participation in local churches. No detail is too small or insignificant to be left out: from upcoming revivals all the way to meeting times for the "young women's etiquette class."⁶⁴ Others pages devoted to Women's church organizations listed local upcoming fundraisers and ask for donations to needy women and children. Another two full pages are devoted to men's sports with pictures of athletic black males from local high schools and colleges triumphantly dunking baskets and holding trophies. Numerous issues contain smiling pictures of black students winning academic awards, and often feature prominent black doctors, lawyers and professors in a "Citizen of the Week" column. Pride exudes from every page of the *Nashville Globe* over the respectable achievements of Nashville's black community.

While ladies columns in black and white papers were often very similar, issues of race did occasionally change the tone. Black uplift through respectability is at its peak as the "ladies' column" editor wrote in August of 1956, "As the men begin to gather for the upcoming NAACP conference at the beginning of this month, we must all work even more faithfully to keep lovely to look at."⁶⁵ Such statements are not out of the ordinary in black publications in the 1950s. In fact, "women's pages" in newspapers and mass-circulated magazines like *Ebony* stressed the need for black women to work hard to run their homes and care for their children efficiently

while providing physical satisfaction and psychological reassurance for black men whose self-esteem was frequently undermined by the ravages of racism and its attendant problems of economic, social and political powerlessness.⁶⁶ Though, articles aimed at black women in the *Nashville Globe* are often impossible to differentiate from those aimed at white women in the *Tennessean* or *Nashville Banner* in the 1950s. The same recipes, dating and marriage tips and fashion advice fill the pages. Articles such as “How to Put a Fitted Sheet on a Mattress” written by Ruth Leigh, the director of the Cannon Homemaking Institute, and “Beauty Tips,” written weekly by a local women comprise the women’s section of the papers.⁶⁷

Raised to believe race leaders should be highly-educated, successful adult men, young women’s participation alongside black men and as leaders proved particularly jarring for the black community. Long held community-wide ideas about respectability and racial uplift made it difficult for black adults to fully accept students’ new radical actions beginning in 1960s. Used to reading about college students’ respectable achievements in the *Nashville Globe*, seeing pictures of the same students being hauled to jail was a difficult adjustment for the students’ parents.

Not Outside the Discourse, but Within

Though students’ actions in the 1960s differed from their parents’ civil rights activities in the previous decade, students were not immune to 1950s discourses of respectability and racial uplift. Parents and colleges influenced students’ mindset, but images of respectability also filled the airwaves in new forms of media, like television, created after World-War II. Respectability was not a strictly black or white ideology, and television affected everyone’s vision of ideal gender roles, familiar and society relations. As Lynn Spigel argues in *Make Room for TV*, mass media’s expansion through inventions such as the radio and television flattened ethnic differences and created a sense of respectability that cut across racial and class lines.⁶⁸ Media set

forth an image of the “strong, male household leader and the moralistic and loving housewife” in such powerful new ways that it was impossible for anyone to ignore. Though students began to practice uplift in a manner that diverged from their parents, and young black women began to take more egalitarian roles within the civil rights leadership structure, students could not fully separate from the rhetoric surrounding them. Many of the students’ ideas about respectability did not change and, like adult leaders, students often drew on old discourses concerning respectable uplift work to legitimize their new actions.

On black college campuses in Nashville in the late 1950s, rules abounded concerning respectable behavior. Despite a student’s background, upon entering the university, black men and women began being trained to be the next generation of elite community members. Rules regarding dress, gender relations, extra-curricular activities, and church attendance seemed to dictate students every action. Rules for young black women were especially harsh. Like white female college students, black women were forced to take home economics classes and were given strict curfews and dress codes to groom them for their future as dutiful wives. Simply because these rules existed did not mean women always obeyed. Angeline Butler, a student at Fisk University from 1958-1962, remembers sneaking out to drink and talk with friends late into the evening.⁶⁹ Nellie Carter Hall recalls questioning the gendered rules in the late 1950s.⁷⁰ “All those boys got to go out at all hours of the night, but they close and lock our dorm doors at 9 pm. Course, that just meant we had to be sneakier,” says Hall.⁷¹

Though students questioned and tested the rules, many of the ideas associated with respectability remained, especially at more elite schools like Fisk. Angeline Butler said of the female Fisk student body:

“You know, Fisk gave them the best education a black woman could get in the country, and she was the most sought-after person, too, and she knew it. Fisk was more like a

finishing school--the way they dealt with women, the expectations of women. The relationships to sororities, fraternities. The fur coats and cashmere sweaters. Looks were everything.”⁷²

The attention to looks and respectable dress is present even once the sit-ins began. Blacks, like whites, were subject to the same consumer culture that placed great importance on fashionable dress.⁷³ Wearing one’s finest while demonstrating was not an attempt to fool adults into finding a commonality between the two divergent groups’ conception of race work but was an important aspect of respectability which transcended generations. Even though many students at Tennessee A&I and American Baptist Seminary came from poorer backgrounds, similar attention to outward displays of respectability inculcated in students at all black universities minimized class difference and united students around similar values. Pictures of sit-in participants contrasted against slovenly dressed white teenagers harassing them proved especially powerful images in the black community.⁷⁴ Respectable dress served as a point to bridge the generation gap between differing conceptions of racial uplift work.

Like the generations that came before them, students also continued to consider black men and women with lighter skin and straighter hair more elite than blacks with more African features. Diane Nash, who won multiple beauty pageants in Chicago before attending Howard, was very light-skinned and considered extremely beautiful by all her colleagues. Not only was Diane’s perceived beauty mentioned in all newspaper and magazines which interviewed her, but her fellow students consistently commented on it, always relating it to her fair features. In fact, Nash’s light skin seemed to be a hallmark of her beauty to some. Andrew Young, aide to Martin Luther King and future ambassador to the United Nations, said she “looked like the kind of young woman who would be a cheerleader or homecoming queen--popular on campus, pretty, light-skinned and from a middle-class family.” Time would later describe her as a “Catholic with

light enough skin to pass for white,” while *Jet* magazine referenced her as the “Pretty Fisk Coed” and “comely coed.” John Lewis, a fellow NSM board member, was simply awed by her beauty. “She was one of God’s beautiful creatures,” wrote Lewis, “just about the most gorgeous woman any of us had ever seen. Fair-skinned and beautiful green-eyes.”⁷⁵ Perhaps Diane’s “elite” features made her a better candidate for a race leader when the sit-in movement began. Diane’s physical characteristics may have helped to legitimize her actions in the minds of the black community and make following her lead an acceptable and respectable option. Her fair-skin made her more respectable not only in the eyes of adults, but students as well.

Like their parents, student activists continued to believe their middle-class status and education required them to be race leaders. Students, like the generation of race leaders that came before them, saw themselves as especially equipped to solve the community’s problems. Acceptable forms of civil rights activities changed for the students, but the importance of respectability and middle-class values did not. Eleanor Chippey-Grier admits that even the NSM had trouble accepting community members without a college education. “I’m not sure we as a group were as tolerant as we should have been with people who were not on the same level,” she says. “We did find some people who were excellent people that you had to figure out were excellent people, and you got them kind of late into the game.”⁷⁶ Students did not initially disregard class differences and join ranks with all blacks in attempt to fight for civil rights. Instead, Nashville’s civil rights activities continued to be a movement largely for the middle-class. Like the previous generation of race leaders, students fought for the full privileges of middle-class status granted to white middle-class Americans. Black students, like many Americans, bought into the idea of the “self-made man” and the rewards that resulted from success. They did not always contextualize impoverished blacks’ situation in terms of racism.

Instead of fighting racism at a very base level, students seemed to want to be able to enjoy the privileges of their already accomplished status and success.

Students also continued to remain uncritical of the American system of government and their status as citizens fully entitled to their rights. As Clayborne Carson argues, “The sit-in movement was not a signal for a shift in basic American attitudes and values but an attempt to overcome the barrier that still separated black students from their white middle-class counterparts, through tactics that were in accord with prevailing American values. The sit-ins were an outgrowth of racial assimilation and an expression of the desire for further assimilation.”⁷⁷ Like their parents, black university students were angered that they were barred from paths of upward mobility and felt especially deserved of respect due to their higher social position. These students were not revolutionaries. They did not question the American economic or political system. The students simply fought for the ability to fully participate in American society, and they were often quick to voice their patriotic sentiments. Diane Nash connected the struggle for racial equality to the struggle against communism. “Maybe someday a Negro will invent one of our missiles,” she said to a *Nashville Tennessean* reported after spending a day in jail after a sit-in April of 1960.⁷⁸

Students were not blind to the apprehensions or the obstacles which prevented parents’ participation in the movement. Students with parents whose jobs depended on white bosses were especially worried about the consequences of their actions. Nellie Hall explains that fellow Tennessee A&I student Frankie Keeling was worried about getting arrested because “her parents worked very hard.”⁷⁹ Understanding the adults’ predicament, Catherine Brooks, a member of the Student Movement executive board, even viewed her participation in the movement as on behalf of her parents’ generation. Brooks writes, “Older people in positions like teachers and et cetera-

see, their jobs was in jeopardy. They just had to be real careful. And they were taught to be real careful too. We did the job they couldn't do."⁸⁰ Students often saw their parents as bound by rules of respectability and forced to defer to white society in ways college students could avoid, thus making it their duty to not only fight for racial uplift, but also to represent their parents.

Sit-in participants often felt torn by diverging concepts of respectability and were troubled by transgressing their parents' warnings. Angeline Butler claims that Diane Nash, the woman who adamantly denied taking bail after being jailed for her participation in Nashville sit-ins, had a difficult time mentally adjusting to the thought of spending time behind bars. "Psychologically, she didn't want to go to jail," wrote Butler. "Mrs. Fuson had to drive her around for two hours to make her turn herself in. She just knew that wasn't where she was supposed to end up."⁸¹ Even Butler was very aware of her fathers' hesitations about her role in the Nashville Movement and his expectations of respectable behavior. Butler said:

"He [her father] didn't really support that at all. He wanted me just to come home and teach. Because he figured he'd sent me to Fisk and he'd groomed me, he'd given me the best education and I deserved to come home and be a good little girl and get married and teach."

Yet like Keeling and Nash, Butler continued to re-work images of respectability and be a part of the Nashville Student Movement. "I didn't agree with that [her fathers' advise]. I wanted something else in my life," wrote Angeline Butler. "I didn't know what it was, but I knew it started with the movement."⁸²

Changes in the College Environment, Changing the Meanings of Respectable Race Work

Though still immersed in discourses of respectability, numerous changes in black women's college experiences caused a shift in the way women thought about respectable race work. Whereas Lawson might have had a difficult time finding willing female workshop

participants in the 1940s, he found college campuses to be prime recruitment areas for young black women not afraid to demand equality in 1958. Students attending college in the late 1950s witnessed an unprecedented amount of court victories for black citizens, read accounts of school desegregation in local papers, and watched daily news reports featuring race uplift activities. Black students in the 1950s were immersed in race uplift work in ways differing drastically from their parents' generation. Civil rights activities were not ignored by Nashville's black college students, and campuses often served as a location to talk through problems and debate correct courses of action. Women students were not left out of these discussions, and they drew on their position within the more egalitarian school settings to become leaders and equal participants when Nashville's sit-in movement began.

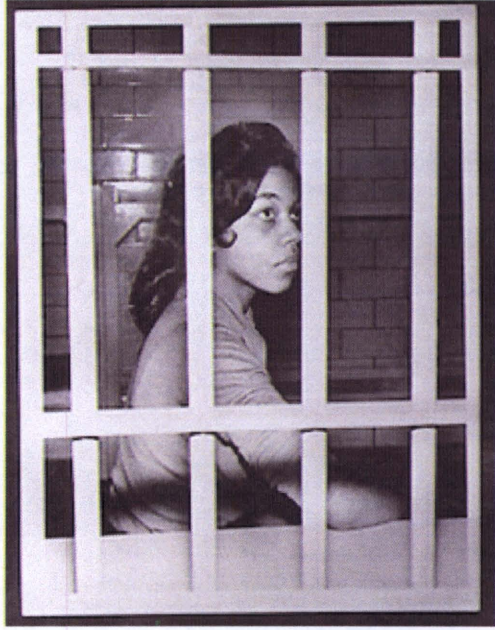
After the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision declared segregation illegal, changes in curriculum at black universities helped create an intellectual environment where students could think through problems of race. After *Brown*, the United Negro College Fund, a major white financial backer of black private colleges such as Fisk and Meharry Medical College, was saddled with a difficult task-- it had to show philanthropists as well as the nation that its institutions were still viable.⁸³ Previously emphasizing that black students learn practical skills, such as yard management and car mechanics, the United Negro College Fund began trying to demonstrate that black colleges were of sufficient quality to attract the attention of both white and black students. Like white institutes of higher learning, arts and sciences curriculum became black universities' focus. Though the United Negro College fund attempted to attract white students, the schools remained overwhelming black institutions. Armed with a black student body and a more intensely intellectual curriculum, black colleges in Nashville began to emerge as centers of black thought, debate, and activism concerning race relations.



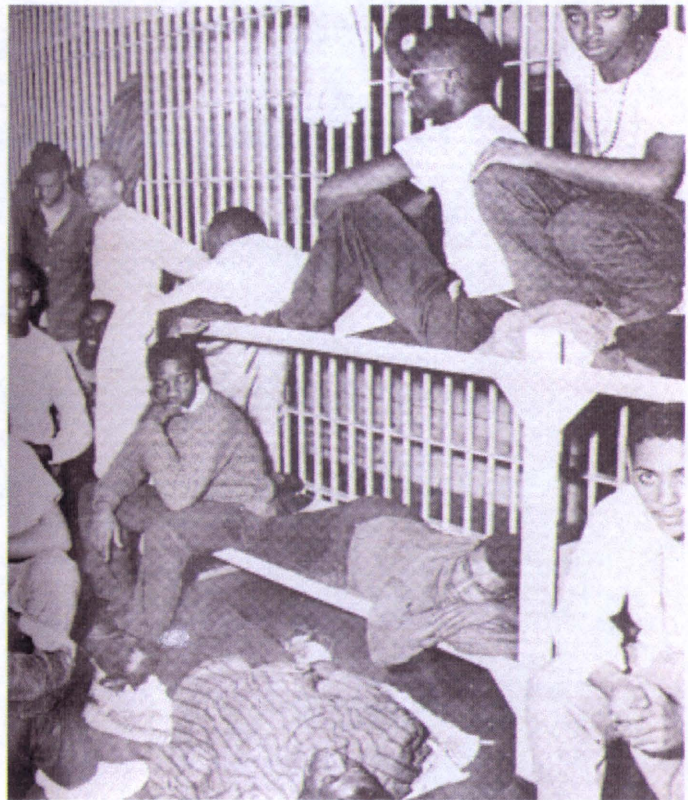
Agitators attack a sit-in demonstrator, 27 February, 1960. *Nashville Banner*
Photo by Vic Cooley. (Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).



Nashville students sit-in, 3 March 1960. *Nashville Tennessean*. Photo by Jimmy Ellis
(Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).



Fisk University Student behind bars in the Nashville jail, 27 February 1960. *Nashville Tennessean*. Photo by Jimmy Ellis (Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).



Students protesting segregation fill the Nashville jail to beyond capacity, 10 March 1960. *Nashville Banner*. Photo by Vic Cooley (Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).



The home of prominent Nashville attorney and councilman Z. Alexander Looby after being bombed around 5:30 a.m., 19 April 19 1960, *Nashville Banner*. Photo by Bob Ray. (Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).



C.T. Vivian, Diane Nash, and Bernard LaFayette leading protest march to the courthouse steps, 19 April 1960, *Nashville Tennessean*. Photo by Jim Ellis (Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).



James Lawson's arrest, 4 March 1960, *Nashville Banner*. Photo by Vic Cooley. (Courtesy of Nashville Public Library).



Matthew Walker, Peggy Alexander, Diane Nash and Stanley Hemphill eat lunch at the previously segregated counter of the Post House Restaurant in the Greyhound bus terminal. 10 May 1960. *Nashville Tennessean*. Photo by Jim Ellis (Courtesy Nashville Public Library).

As curriculum within black colleges improved, post World-War II increases in wealth allowed a higher number of women to attend college than in previous years. From 1945-1950, Fisk University had a female student body that fluctuated between two to five percent.⁸⁴ Between 1955 and 1960, the number of female students dramatically increased to between 20-35 percent.⁸⁵ Women attending black universities had opportunities to engage in intellectual debate alongside male students. University honors societies often had relatively equal numbers of male and female members and leaders, and the humanities department had a male/female balance fairly proportional to ratios of attendance.⁸⁶ Though rules instituted by black universities often differentiated between male and female students, the classroom served as a more level playing field for female students to voice their opinions and display their intellectual talents.

Southern black students were not only engaging in intellectual debate about race issues with each other, but they were increasingly exposed to students from all over the US and the world. Prestigious universities such as Meharry Medical College, Fisk, and American Baptist College attracted black students from diverse sections of the United States, as well as white and black exchange students from abroad. Many young college students, like Angeline Butler, actually became involved in the NSM through Fisk University's International House which local students from all of Nashville's universities frequented. Marion Barry, Angeline Butler, John Lewis, Diane Nash, and Peggy Alexander, all students who would go on to play leading roles in the movement, met at the International House.⁸⁷ Young students from the South were exposed to others to whom Jim Crow was a bizarre, foreign concept. African Liberation Movements along with Jim Crow were regular topics of discussion which greatly influenced, intrigued and raised the consciousness level of black southern college students.⁸⁸

Through Fisk's International House students learned about yet another opportunity to discuss and engage with the topic of race. The International House sponsored weekend retreats at the nearby adult-education center, Highlander Folk School, run by Myles Horton, a local white man who originally began the school to "search for effective solutions to the problems of oppressed mountain people." Founded in the 1930s in Sewanee, Tennessee, Highlander was a center of grassroots political activity and work towards social change. Focusing mainly on Appalachian white poverty and the formation of labor unions in the 1940s, fighting for desegregation and racial equality was added to Highlander's agenda in the mid-1950s. The basic philosophy of Highlander was that oppressed people know the answers to their own problems and the "teacher's" job is to get them talking about those problems, to raise and sharpen questions, and to trust people to come up with the answers."⁸⁹ The Highlander opened its doors to students in 1953 by creating the "Annual Highlander Folk School College Workshops," where students could come and discuss race issues. The Highlander workshop in April 1959, attended by Diane Nash, Marion Barry, C.T. Vivian, John Lewis, Bernard Layfayette, Angeline Butler and Peggy Alexander held discussions about "campus censorship; integration of college faculties and student bodies; exchange opportunities between Negro and white colleges; treatment of minority students, Negro or white as the case may be; and fraternity exclusion."⁹⁰ Women and men both participated and lead formal discussions and workshops and helped formulate solutions to the South's problems.

Along with providing a forum for southern students to discuss race, Highlander gave black students an opportunity to cooperate and make friendships within the white community. When discussing her first trip to Highlander, Angeline Butler says, "They slept in bunk beds, and [it was] probably the first time most of us had had the experience of even sleeping or eating or

washing dishes with white people.” Not only were the students exposed to an environment with a working integrated community, but the young women had the opportunity to meet older black women taking leadership roles in the early civil rights movement. Rosa Parks regularly attended seminars at Highlander, as well as Septima Clark, a well-respected leader and organizer of the Highlander school. Clark started “citizenship schools” within the South which trained local blacks to educate rural black adults in basic reading, writing, and math while informing them of their rights as American citizens and encouraging them to vote. Introductions to female civil rights activist made a memorable impact on young college women spending time at Highlander. Angeline Butler proudly recalls Clark’s accomplishments and remembers her as an outspoken participant in all the discussions.⁹¹

Moving away from a sole focus on direct legal action as the means to gain equality, increasing rhetorical ties to religion by race leaders opened up new opportunities for women’s participation in the civil rights movement. Instead of characterizing racial inequalities as legal flaws which could be reversed through the court system like the NAACP had previously claimed, civil rights leaders like James Lawson framed the issue in terms of good versus evil, the will of God versus the work of the devil, and immorality versus morality. Equality was not something that could be earned or in any way proven-- it was a God-given right. Due to being historically active participants in the black church and viewed as the “more moral gender,” black women were able to justify their heightened race activities.

Though religious rhetoric did justify women’s equal participation in the movement in some of the black community’s minds, the black church was not the main vehicle through which most young women came to the Student Movement. Many women claim that affiliation with the

black church had very little to do with their decision to participate in the movement. Angeline Butler, who was the daughter of a local Nashville Methodist preacher, expressed dissatisfaction with local black churches and entered the movement partly due to her exploration of other religious sects. Butler says:

“We met the Fusons [at Fisk University’s International House] and they were the American Friends. They were the Quakers. And so we began to go to their meetings because we were in rebellion to the black church. You know, we were all looking for something else than what we had.”⁹²

Nellie Hall, when directly asked if involvement in a church community helped encourage her to become a NSM participant, she flatly answers “no.” Instead, like many of the women who came to be involved in the movement, encouragement by a female friend enticed Hall to participate.⁹³

The Christian faith remained an important part of the young black women’s lives, and many students did frame calls for equality in religious terms, but the black church seemed to be outdated and too conservative to pressure for racial equality at the pace with which students were beginning to demand.

Experiences on black college campuses prepared and encouraged young women to actively participate in Nashville’s sit-in movement. Though still subject to discourses of respectability voiced by parents and college rule-makers, a drastically increased black female student body engaged in discussions about the decade’s disappointments and victories in the area of racial uplift work. Women spoke and worked not only with other women, but with black men and diverse students from all across the globe. The more egalitarian environment existing between black men and women on college campuses narrowed --though did not eliminate -- the gender gap evident in the different forms of men and women’s racial uplift activities. Young women’s mothers often found themselves executing black men’s strategies, but young black college women began to participate in strategy development alongside men in the classroom,

International House, and during weekend visits to Highlander. These women would take that particular male/female dynamic with them as the Nashville Student Movement formed. In Nashville's historically black colleges, Lawson found a group of female students ready to push the envelope of civil rights activism.

Bridging the Generational Gap

Knowing exactly what black adults thought about the student movement is a particularly difficult task. A surprisingly small amount of coverage of the students' activities exists in Nashville's black or white newspapers. White local newspaper men purposely attempted to quiet the student's activities. In May of 1960, *Nashville Banner* editor Jimmy Stahlman even found himself under questioning from a *New York Herald Tribune* reporter about how he may have abused the freedom of the press in attempts to silence the local movement, possibly working with the *Tennessean* and downtown merchants to keep any bad publicity from leaking to outsiders. Suspicion of foul play among Nashville journalist was so widespread that CBS News sent northern journalists to the city in attempt to gain the truth about Nashville's recent sit-in activities. Unfortunately, CBS's film crew only distracted Nashvillians from the real issue at hand as the northern journalists' presence increased accusations that the movement was instigated by "outside agitators."⁹⁴ During the months of February to May 1960, the *Tennessean* and *Banner* closely covered the Nashville biracial committees' activities, as well as legal actions that stemmed from the sit-ins, but the students' day to day activities were either completely ignored or relegated to very short articles. Pictures, generally of students being arrested or abused, appeared with more frequency, but rarely are they accompanied with more than a few-lines of explanation.

Even black newspapers had rather limited coverage of the movement. Not only did the *Nashville Globe* have a history of leaving out race activities, but it went out of circulation in 1960 leaving the city without a black newspaper during the months major sit-ins took place. Before going out of production, no mention of Lawson's workshops, students' visits to Highlander or the "testing" of local businesses exists in the *Globe*. Quite possibly students' activities were not considered "serious" race work. Perhaps before large-scale sit-ins occurred throughout the South, reporters viewed the NSM as a passing fad and not worthy of news attention. Soon after the Nashville situation calmed down in May, older NSM member C.T. Vivian made it his priority to create a black Nashville newspaper that would closely follow civil rights activities. His paper, the *Nashville News Star*, began circulating in October 1960.⁹⁵

In the short articles discussing the students' 1960 civil rights activities in the *Tennessean* and *Banner*, reporters rarely interviewed black students and instead interviewed adult black men. Avoiding student leaders like James Lawson, Peggy Alexander, and Angeline Butler, the media turned to Rev. Kelly Miller Smith or Z. Alexander Looby for quotes and information, despite the students more active role in the sit-ins process. Diane Nash is the only women directly quoted in the Nashville newspapers throughout the sit-in movement. In the nine times she is mentioned in either the *Nashville Banner* or *Tennessean* in February through May 1960, her beauty pageant participation or light-skin color is mention in five of them.⁹⁶ Though her leadership position within the NSM certainly made her a likely candidate for an interview, perhaps reporters were particularly intrigued because her perceived beauty and elite status stemming from her fair features directly called into question the changing actions associated with respectable race work.

Definitely not what Stahlman and Nashville's newspaper editors intended, only lightly covering students' activities during the sit-in movement possibly helped the movement far more than harmed it. By the local media not discussing or passing judgment upon the students' activities in great detail, no institution officially passed judgment on the students' activities. The thinking through of the new images of "racial uplift" was largely left in the hands of black community leaders, specifically those involved in the black church. Even though many young black students were becoming less involved, the black church continued to be a central hub of community activity for adults. Values were imparted in sermons and blacks had the ability to define themselves outside the parameters of prevailing racist rhetoric.⁹⁷

Evelyn Higginbotham in *Righteous Discontent* argues that the black church "functioned as a discursive, critical arena--a public sphere in which values and issues were aired, debated and disseminated through the larger black community."⁹⁸ The black church served as a bridge between elite race leaders and the rest of the black community enabling respectability to become a central ideology negotiated and agreed upon by much of the black community, regardless of class status. Due to wide-spread adoption of middle-class values, simply affecting the social and moral mores of the middle-class provided a bulwark of sorts, even for those who did not really have the material accoutrements of that class.⁹⁹ Elite blacks often felt church participation and attendance gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their respectability and help guide less privileged blacks. At the same time, churches often leveled class differences and allowed blacks of all classes to help negotiate community values.

Black churches, like Kelly Miller Smith's Capital Hill First Baptist Church, also served as the local center of racial uplift activity. With the NCLC located within black churches, NCLC ministers were able to serve as bridge leaders between the student activists' and the adult

community. The NCLC ministers fostered ties between the social movement and the larger black community.¹⁰⁰ Kelly Miller Smith is the perfect example of a man serving in this capacity. Kelly Miller Smith, though an NCLC member and sit-in supporter, was also an upstanding race leader according to adults' standards. He served as NAACP president for four years prior to the sit-in movement, had a wife, kids, higher-education and middle-class status. His wife, Alice Smith, did not work and devoted much of her time to highly respectable women's race uplift activities. Minister of the largest black church in Nashville and supporter of the students' activities, Rev. Smith had a considerable amount vested in his ability to convince black adults, both older race leaders and those not as active, of the positive qualities of the student sit-in movement. He had to prove to adults that these students were still behaving in respectable ways. Rev. Smith dedicated a large portion of his time at the pulpit from February to May 1960 to attempting to prove to his adult congregation that the students were not "rebellious youths, but fine young people armed with a dream."¹⁰¹

Rev. Smith's sermons, newspaper and church bulletin quotes, demonstrate his ability to situate students' civil rights activities within the framework of older discourses of respectability. Famed historian of the sit-in movement Clayborne Carson claims students' demonstrated "passively aggressive behavior-- stepping over the line and waiting, rather than exhibiting overtly hostile or revolutionary behavior."¹⁰² The passive aggressive behavior young college women demonstrated during sit-ins threatened adults' conception of the ideal public image for young women. Rev. Smith calmed the adult community and let them know young men and women were still performing their traditional gender roles. Whenever young female activists are discussed by Smith, they are spoken about in terms of self-sacrificing femininity. He repeatedly draws on the view that black men were more discriminated against than women. In one sermon

at the end of February 1960, Smith says, “They even throw our women into jail, innocent women who do nothing but sacrifice for their men.”¹⁰³ In a March 5 interview with the *Nashville Tennessean* he claims, “Persecuting our men is one thing, but harming our innocent women is another.” Smith invoked the same image of women as innocent toilers for men’s betterment as he did in the eulogy devote to Nannie Helen Burroughs months earlier.

While depicting black women as sacrificing for men, Kelly Miller Smith goes to great lengths to demonstrate black male youths’ manliness in contrast to the white male teenagers who tormented sit-in participants. Reported in the Capital Hill First Baptist Church bulletin written by Smith after the first sit-in occurred, he refers to the young whites present as “leather jacketed white teenagers” and describes insults as coming from “raspy and cracking teenage voices from behind.”¹⁰⁴ In Smith’s unpublished memoir of the movement, all local white men’s words, including adults, are recorded in dialect, but black men’s words are typed in perfect English. “Awright, awright, git back there! You ain’t s’posed to be talkin’ to ‘em,” a white police office tells NCLC leaders speaking with students after their arrests. “I apologize, sir. We were just trying to take care of some business,” Smith records C.T. Vivian responding.¹⁰⁵

In reporting to the local chapter of the NAACP on March 1, 1960, Smith says, “Can you really expect a muscular, athletic young man to see his girlfriend abused without lifting a finger? I know that they [the black college men] could take care of themselves in a fist fight. Of course, they had no way of knowing whether there would be brass knuckles, knives or even arms to content with.”¹⁰⁶ Not only did Smith feel the need to demonstrate that the whites were much less able to “fight like men,” but that the black men’s restraint was assuredly not due to their inability to physically defend themselves or black women. In reiterating black college men’s manliness, Smith also demonstrates that young women’s participation and leadership has not emasculated

the males in any way. He ensures adults that young black men are still more than willing to defend black women's honor. Smith even claimed the movement began in reaction to mistreatment of black women. Smith said:

“Back in 1958...we heard complaints from quite a few Negro women about the way they have been treated at local stores. They had been denied use of all dining facilities except the lunch counter in the sub-basement....Some said they had been publicly humiliated when ordered out of the ladies rest rooms and told to use segregated rest rooms in the basement.”¹⁰⁷

Defending black women's honor may have been particularly important to black men who were long forced to remain silent while whites took advantage of black women. Adults, seeing the gender divide between men and women narrow, would perhaps have worried young male students would lose their sense of duty towards black women.

Smith worked especially hard to ease the minds of adults whose children were serving time in jail, which had especially negative connotations for respectable blacks. To justify students going to jail for the cause, Smith drew heavily on religious imagery, going as far as suggesting students had a “crucifixion complex” in one March sermon.¹⁰⁸ He also consistently described their appearance as “the battered, the beaten, the tired, the hungry.”¹⁰⁹ By presenting the students as Christ-like figures, Smith could guide the adult community away from associating jail with stereotypical low-class black immorality and towards association with Christian morality and martyrdom.

Smith emphasized that students were publicly displaying their respectability for all to see and thereby further refuting stereotypical images of blacks held by white southerners. Smith wrote in a March 10 Capital Hill First Baptist Church Bulletin:

“The Negro Student who has participated in the sit-in movement has shattered the mental image of the Negro held by the average white southerner. This is confusing because he has believed that the Negro is fundamentally a foot-shuffling, hat-doffing, always smiling

person. He is happiest when allowed to roam undisciplined through his community, content with handouts (material, political and philosophical) from his white boss. This is what has been taught by his parents and, until recently, in his schools. This is the image implicit in the strictly segregated society. It is understandable, therefore, that the average white southerner is puzzled when he finds himself confronted by the Negro of the sit-in movement--the neatly dressed, quite spoken, articulate and determined person who is assuming leadership among southern Negroes in general.”¹¹⁰

Smith eased the minds of black adults by assuring them students’ activities still fell within the context of respectability. More importantly, students were achieving what adults had worked for decades attempting to accomplish: students were succeeding in eliminating unrespectable stereotypes of blacks from the minds of white southerners.

Though black male leaders like Rev. Smith utilized old rhetoric to demonstrate that students’ activities did not differ a great deal from previous race work, students did not always understand their activities in the same context. Smith drew on images of black women as innocent victims and self-sacrificing martyrs in the battle for civil rights, but black women often described their experiences as exciting and empowering. Diane Nash says her participation in the Nashville Student Movement was the first time “a group of people were suddenly proud to be called ‘black,’ and in each student “was born a new awareness of themselves as an individual.”¹¹¹ Nash later went on say:

“The movement had a way of reaching inside me and bringing out things that I never knew were there. Like courage, and love for people. It was a real experience to be part of a group of people who put their bodies between you and danger. And to love people that you work with enough that you would put your body between them and danger.”¹¹²

Women described their participation in the movement as exhilarating and accompanied by new feelings of accomplishment and self-worth. Nellie Hall recalls, “I was scared out of my mind, but I knew for the first time I was doing something important.” Angeline Butler described her sit-in experience by saying, “Sitting-in was such a rush that you forgot to be afraid. We knew we were making history.”¹¹³

Women did not see their actions in terms of a fight for men to be able to “achieve their rightful positions as leaders.” They had a more holistic vision of emancipation from racism that included men *and* women’s increased ability to experience privilege reserved for whites.¹¹⁴ As Historian Cynthia Fleming argues in “Black Women and Black Power,” many female civil rights participants did not feel their actions or aspiration were circumscribed because of their gender.¹¹⁵ Though from a present day standpoint it is easy to see continued gender discrimination, young black women were operating in a more egalitarian setting than black women had ever experienced. To these women, equality did not mean strictly gaining the right to become a respectable middle-class wife and mother, though undoubtedly this was many of the young women’s plans. They also wanted to have the ability to continue to pursue their education, be able to walk on sidewalks, ride public transportation, eat at lunch counters, and raise their future children without being forced to humble themselves to often less-educated or successful whites.

Perhaps at the same time Kelly Miller Smith attempted to garner adult support behind the students, other NCLC ministers in the Nashville area were using the same rhetoric tactics. By displaying public support for the students within their churches despite any private misgivings, NCLC leaders transformed the students into “respectable” agitators. As Rev. Smith embraced the students’ actions and legitimized them in the eyes of the adult black community, he effectively shifted the very meaning of respectable race work. Students’ actions, though initially conflicting with adults’ ideas of respectability, became justified as Smith presented them to adults by drawing on safe and familiar images. As these church leaders granted the movement legitimacy, black adults in the community felt more empowered to support students. During the first few sit-ins in Nashville, students and NCLC leaders had trouble finding adults willing to transport students and few adults came out to support the college youth but, by the end of March 1960, the

United Church Women had issued a statement in support of the students in both local papers.¹¹⁶ That same month, church women bought candy and snacks for the students in jail, and made sandwiches for the students waiting at the First Baptist Church to be transported to the sit-in sites.¹¹⁷ NAACP leaders assisted in transporting students to sites, defended students in court when necessary, and raised funds to help the students' cause.¹¹⁸

Most telling of adults' new-found support for the students' cause is their participation in a boycott of Nashville's downtown white-owned stores beginning the last week in March 1960. NSM and NCLC leaders called for the boycott as a way to exert more pressure on downtown business owners and end segregation (and thus the sit-ins) at a quicker rate. Church leaders announced the boycott during services and by April 4, the NCLC issued a statement proclaiming the boycott 98% effective.¹¹⁹ Again, NSM and NCLC leaders situated the boycott in terms of old rhetoric. NCLC member Vivian Henderson positioned the boycott in the framework of Christian duty. "This is not a boycott to club men down," he claimed. "This is an economic withdrawal against evil. To destroy radical evil, you have to be radically good. It is radical evil that rules this town and it will take radical good to break it."¹²⁰ Smith chose to focus on the boycott's ability to bolster black business, which was traditionally seen as a means of racial uplift.¹²¹ Black men and women did not venture downtown to shop for over a month, severely damaging department stores' sales during the Easter season. Though adults were clearly being won to the side of the students, more weeks passed before large numbers of black adults joined students in public demonstrations.

One area Smith greatly embellished, though perhaps unknowingly, when attempting to win the support of adults was the amount of control the NCLC actually had over the students'

activities. Smith went to great lengths to make it clear to adults that the students were not without guidance and adult leadership, despite the truly loose hold NCLC leaders had over the NSM. In recounting the story of the first sit-in in his unpublished memoirs of civil rights activity in Nashville, Smith says: "Once, Earl Mays, a Fisk student, strongly denied that there was any organization connected with the student group to a local reporter." Smith goes on to admit, "This is hardly the kind of statement that would secure community support, although it was perhaps innocently made."¹²² Smith realized the presence of adult leadership was necessary for adults to view the NSM as a legitimate organization that meant business, as opposed to a fad and a fleeting movement. Connection to respectable NCLC ministers surely eased the minds of parents worried about the NSM becoming too radical. Adults could be assured students were guided and supervised by trusted Christian race leaders.

The students were actually highly critical of NCLC leaders' attempt to control their activities. Earl Mays was probably voicing the feelings of most the student activists instead of making "an honest mistake." In April 1960, when Nashville was in the midst of its sit-in movement, two important meetings occurred that fully showcased the students' independence and dissatisfaction with black male NCLC leadership: the first at Highlander Center April 1-3 and second at Shaw University April 16-18.

On April 1-3, 1960, eighty-two participants, 47 black and 35 white, including consultants, students and faculty members from twenty colleges, gathered at Highlander center for the 7th Annual Highlander Folk School College Workshop. Six students from the Nashville movement, including Diane Nash, James Lawson and, Angeline Butler and C.T. Vivian were in attendance. The Nashville students were asked to present a report of the current movement in Nashville specifically discussing the way leadership was used in the college group, the

philosophy and the purposes of the movement as understood by the students, and the ways in which the demonstration group related to the wider community. The Nashville student group spoke appreciatively of the support they had from the NCLC, but voiced the opinion that they were uncertain about the wisdom in seeking to work directly with the organization in the future. They even advised other students to confine their movement to college groups. Interestingly, Nashville's young black women were the most vocal about their dislike of adult leadership, perhaps because of the weak images of female sit-in participants disseminated by NCLC ministers. Angeline Butler claimed that the student movement represented "the kind of direct action against immediate injustices of discrimination which the average adult would find it difficult to undertake, regardless of how sympathetic they may be with the movement." Diane Nash emphasized that "Adults are essentially conservative, and because of this the movement is especially suited to students alone."¹²³ Clearly, the NSM members were not as dutiful towards the adult leadership as Smith would have liked his congregation to believe.

On April 16-18, Nashville Student Movement leaders attended yet another conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina where they again voiced their reluctance to affiliate with adult leadership. On the invitation of Ella Baker, executive director of the SCLC, student activists from around the country gathered at the conference. One hundred twenty-six student delegates from 58 sit-in centers in 12 states, along with delegates from 19 northern colleges, SCLC, CORE, Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), National Student Association (NSA), and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) attended. From the NSM, Diane Nash, Peggy Alexander, Angeline Butler, James Lawson, John Lewis, Catherine Brooks, Bernard Lafayette, James Bevel, and Marion Barry were present.¹²⁴ During the conference, Baker encouraged the students to form a national organization all their own. Students agreed and the Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed. Instead of being closely tied to SCLC or other groups such as the NAACP as a "youth division," students, supported by Baker, demanded SNCC stand on its own. Many of the students in the Nashville Movement, like Lewis, Nash, Bevel, and Alexander all went on to play prominent roles in SNCC. In fact, Peggy Alexander and Diane Nash wrote SNCC's bylaws that weekend which assured rotated group leaders and only distant affiliation with the adult-run SCLC.¹²⁵ Though not free from gendered discourse of respectability surrounding racial activities, women like Peggy Alexander and Diane Nash did seek to participate in and create organizations with the least possible restrictions placed upon their participation.

Through Different Eyes: The Bombing of the Looby Home

Black Nashvillians put aside their generational differences when someone threw a bomb into the home of Z. Alexander Looby. Nashville Student Movement members peacefully lay in their beds after returning home late at night from the meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina where they voiced their discontents over adult NCLC leadership. Then, around 5:30 a.m. on the morning of April 19, 1960, the unthinkable happened in Nashville, Tennessee. The bomb was thrown from a passing car into the window of Z. Alexander Looby's home, completely demolishing an entire side of his house. Many students at nearby Meharry Medical College heard the explosion, and stunned student activists immediately gathered at the Capital Hill First Baptist Church. Students were relieved to hear Looby and his wife successfully escaped, though barely, and were without injury. They were astonished by the severe tactics utilized by their opponents to send their segregationist message.

With emotions high, word spread that the assembled students wanted to hold a silent march towards city hall in protest of the bombing. Mixed stories exist concerning the march towards Mayor Ben West's courthouse steps' origin. Angeline Butler, claimed students just began to amass on Jefferson Street after hearing the blast and "just started walking."¹²⁶ Regardless, knowing a large public demonstration was imminent, the Nashville Student Movement and a few NCLC members met at Smith's church and prepared a joint statement to present to the mayor once the marchers arrived. The group decided Diane Nash and C.T. Vivian should be the ones to deliver the grievances to the mayor. C.T. Vivian, an American Baptist Seminary student, member of the NCLC as well as the NSM, was a bit older [born in 1924], but he was with the students from the beginning, even supporting their decision to leave adult leadership during the Shaw University meeting. Differing from other NCLC ministers, C.T. Vivian actually participated in the sit-ins. His dual membership made him an important link between the Nashville student and adult groups.

By the time the two organizations decided on a statement, the march had already begun, and Vivian and Nash had to run to catch-up to the front of the line. As the marchers passed Nashville's four black universities and moved through the streets of black neighborhoods, surprisingly, more and more people joined the procession. People waited in front yards and on street corners for the procession to pass so they could add to the marchers' ranks. Hearing the group was on the way, Nashville's Mayor Ben West waited for them on the steps of the courthouse. By the time the group arrived at city hall, 2, 500 black Nashvillians of all ages and backgrounds were following in line, the only noise arising from the sound of shoes on blacktop.

C.T. Vivian read the hastily drafted joint statement of NCLC and NSM, which charged the mayor with having ignored "moral issues" surrounding segregation. West immediately

answered without directly addressing Vivian's statement: "I appeal to all citizens to end discrimination, to have no bigotry, no bias, and no hatred." After a quick pause, twenty one year-old Diane Nash pointedly asked, "Do you mean that to include lunch counters too?" Clearly, Mayor West's appeal to white southerners' humanity did not satisfy Nash. Students were tired of words and ready for action after watching the slow progress of integration during their parents' reign over race work. Pausing to collect himself after the unexpected direct confrontation from the young woman, Mayor West simply responded with, "yes."¹²⁷ The young Diane Nash had aggressively and shrewdly backed the mayor of Nashville into a corner. For West to say he opposed the desegregation of lunch counters would have been impossible-- and a media fiasco with 2,500 black citizens silently waiting for his reply. During the previous months, West skirted direct confrontation by claiming he had no control over business's choice to remain segregated. Diane Nash's question was the first time the Mayor was publicly asked about his personal opinion on the issue. Nash did not plan on accepting anything but a direct answer concerning Mayor West's feelings. West had astutely measured the change that was occurring. The crowd erupted in a barrage of applause.¹²⁸

For the first time, the entire black community joined students in a public demonstration against racial injustices. Three months after the bombing occurred, Warren Pitts, adult black business owner told Wallace Westerfeldt of the Nashville Community Relations Conference, who was compiling an account of the Nashville sit-in movement, "I think this act [the bombing of the Looby home] did more to change the climate of community opinion than any other single factor," said Pitts. "It more or less eliminated any possibility of community acceptance, or tolerance of violence in the downtown area as a result of integrating the lunch counters."¹²⁹ Surely the fact that Z. Alexander Looby was the one attacked had a great deal to do with their

new-found bravery. Looby, older and elite, and playing by the rules, he epitomized the “race man” of the 1950s. Looby was the portrait of respectability and a tireless worker for Nashville’s desegregation and civil rights long before the sit-ins began. Soon after the momentous U. S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), Looby filed a suit against the local public schools on behalf of A. Z. Kelly, a barber, whose son Robert was denied access to a nearby white school and in September 1955, he filed the *Kelly v. Board of Education of Nashville* suit that became the most protracted school desegregation litigation in Tennessee. Looby continued throughout the 1950s to file suits in order to desegregate educational facilities and business, as well as serving on the NAACP Board of Directors from 1953-1954 and 1956-1962.¹³⁰ He was married, with a wife and two children, and was a vestryman, senior warden, and lay reader for the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church.¹³¹

In 1949 an anonymous writer for the Church Service Directory and News Journal, published in Nashville commented:

“He has no peers as a race man and his victories as an attorney are inspiring to a group struggling to take its place in the sun... Mr. Lobby’s name has [come] to mean to Negroes everywhere, a symbol of a fighting, restless, stalwart giant of character in the struggle for human rights for all mankind.”¹³²

A Fisk University professor told a Nashville journalist in 1961, “It’s seldom you see Mr. Looby walking anywhere in the neighborhood that there aren’t at least two or three children tagging after him.”¹³³

After the attack, perhaps adults realized that respectability was not enough to protect blacks from severe racial violence. Though Looby never sat-in himself, he made it clear he believed the bombing was “very definitely connected with the sit-in controversy.” He was the leading black attorney defending students after arrests resulting from movement participation. The bombing of the Looby home directly highlighted the slow progress adults had been making

towards racial equality and their continued second-class citizenship, despite their achievements. Highly educated and successful, Looby worked for racial uplift through respectable means. Looby was even successful enough to have served a term on the Nashville City Council as the only black man. He seemed to have truly gained respect and peer-status among white community members but, when his home was bombed, a reminder of the permanence of racial inequalities echoed throughout the city. Most-likely questioning old tactics of racial uplift since the sit-in movement began, the bombing of Looby's home made adults realize new actions were necessary for real change to occur. Black adults, for the first time, took to the streets.

Interestingly, adults did not look to Looby or his peers to guide their actions after the event on the morning on April 19. Instead, the same adults who months earlier warned their children against sit-in participation, joined the student-lead march to the Mayor's front steps. Breaking further with traditional race work, Diane Nash, a young woman, was part of the leadership chosen to confront the mayor. Her aggressive words directed towards the mayor breached the boundaries of previously understood respectable women's behavior but did not result in apprehension and discomfort among adult blacks. Young Diane Nash distinguished herself as a leader and spokesperson for the entire black community.

Diane Nash's image was constructed in a way that allowed her to be a respectable leader to all who witnessed her actions on the mayor's steps. Nash operated in a complex framework of multiple, shifting discourses of respectability. She was perfectly dressed in her skirt and cardigan, her elite beauty-queen features shining, displaying her middle-class status for all to see. At the same time, she practiced the aggressive confrontational tactics encouraged among the student community. Nash did not remain quiet while C.T. Vivian spoke to the mayor. Instead, she presented NSM grievances with Vivian as an equal, and then further pushed the mayor

towards a more definitive answer while Vivian remained speechless. While perhaps some black community members understood Diane Nash's actions as differing from women's previous roles in racial uplift activities, Kelly Miller Smith's rhetoric in his sermons and speeches demonstrates that many blacks understood Nash's words and actions as falling within the same definitions of respectability present in the 1950s.

Adults may have viewed her blunt remarks to the mayor as her avid fighting for black men's rights or her sacrifice as an innocent Christ-like figure attempting to right the "moral wrong" of segregation. Mayor West's comments to the *Nashville Tennessean* even alludes he understood Nash's question within that context. He says:

"She asked me some pretty soul-searching question--and one that was addressed to me as a man. And I found that I had to answer it frankly and honestly--that I did not agree that it was morally right for someone to sell them merchandise and refuse them service. And I had to answer her just exactly like that...It was a moral question—one that a *man* had to answer, not a politician."¹³⁴

Her confrontation with West could have been viewed as the ultimate conflict between good and evil: an innocent, giving, religious woman versus corruption, evil and immorality epitomized by Mayor West and his prior support of segregation. Furthermore, if men were believed to bear a larger burden of racial discrimination, Vivian's silence could be understood as an intelligent avoidance of imminent harsh retaliation from the white community. His lack of words could be seen as a manifestation of his manly self-discipline, previously emphasized by Smith in his explanation of young black men's ability to suppress their innate desire to retaliate when abused by white teenagers. Though Diane Nash's actions differed greatly from the race women who came before her, rhetoric within the black community, especially stemming from NCLC ministers like Smith, helped situate her words and presence within the context of respectability.

Generational differences in the way black women remembered Diane Nash's confrontation with the mayor especially highlights the fluidity of blacks' understanding of respectability. Though they contextualized Nash's position in different ways, most women present at the courthouse approved and were impressed by the young college woman's actions. While adults often viewed the scene in the context of respectability, students, especially female students, understood Nash's action as a challenge to authority. Young women especially felt a sense of unity with Diane Nash and were extremely excited about her words. "[It was] quite exciting to see her stand, and question him, and speak back to him, and for him to admit what he did. She was so brave. All us girls [referring to Brooks and her friends who marched beside her] were cheering her on up there," says Catherine Brooks.¹³⁵ Angeline Butler says:

"We were just so proud that day because you got to remember that that statement that Diane made that day was the one that we had all dreamt up. That happened to be Diane that day. It could have been me or Catherine Burks, or it could have been Eleanor or Peggy Alexander, you know?"¹³⁶

Nellie Hall remembers:

"I was in awe of her up there-telling that mayor exactly what we all wanted to say. All we was thinking about- changing the Establishment, the commerce of the city, and to let them know we was, as young people, not going to stand up and take this mess any longer."¹³⁷

On the other hand, Carrie Gentry, an adult member of Smith's First Baptist Church, while still impressed by Nash's actions is quick to allude to her respectable mannerisms and dress code.

Gentry says:

"I remember Diane Nash. Very active in that sit-in movement. Very attractive. She just looked straight out of the movies the day she spoke to Mayor West. Very fair-skinned lady. That day I thought, 'Well, gee whiz, they might think that she's a white person and will go and hang her for being out there with all these black folks.'¹³⁸

Black women, both young and older, were able to appreciate Nash's activities through different frameworks of understanding. Though rhetoric of respectability had not changed, black adults'

acceptance of Nash and Vivian's actions demonstrate a shift in the actions associated with this rhetoric. Black community members tied students' new actions, including women's more aggressive outspokenness and leadership positions, into old understandings of respectability. A bombing specifically targeting beloved community member Z. Alexander Looby's home might have been the final impetus necessary to convince adults of the need for more radical action, but older black community members turned to students, often young women like Diane Nash, to be the new race leaders because she personified the new, broadened notion of respectable black womanhood--empowering, beautiful, respectability dress, and aggressively demanding equality. For years, respectable adult men like Z. Alexander Looby attempted to defend and protect the black community against racial injustices. But, on the courthouse steps on 19 April 1960, Diane Nash was the one who spoke in reaction to injustices committed against Looby.

A New Generation of Race Leaders

At 3:15 pm on Tuesday, May 10, 1960, small groups of blacks, carefully selected by their leaders, calmly walked up to the lunch counters in six downtown Nashville stores and sat down to an historic mid-afternoon snack. Many of them sat next to white persons. Their orders for food were received and served--by white persons. Despite unseasonably cold weather and the time of day, the lunch rooms were crowded. Heavy detachments of plain clothes police were there to prevent trouble. A well-organized corps of observing United Church Women posted there by the Kelly Miller Smith's Capital Hill First Baptist Church stood ready to lend encouragement to the blacks and whites participating in the unusual event and if need be, to act as sharp-eyed witnesses to any unexpected event that might develop.¹³⁹ No trouble arose that day, nor was any truly expected. The young black students eating at the lunch counter were not

staging a sit-in. They already fought their battle and were testing for the first time the newly-desegregated lunch counters in Nashville.

The bombing of the Looby home, the march to the court house steps, and Diane Nash's words resonated loudly in the Nashville community. In an interview with Wallace Westerfeldt, one white business owner said:

“In the beginning we believed this was largely a student affair and quite possibly one that was led and organized by outsiders, students from the North and East. We got an inkling of how deep their [black Nashvillians] feelings were when 4000 [sic] of them marched in Nashville. They were the Negro men and women of Nashville who lived here, work here.”¹⁴⁰

Two days after the bombing occurred, before students could organize yet another sit-in, Mayor West called for the establishment of another biracial committee, this time asking NSM members to participate in the decision making process.¹⁴¹ Students did have trouble with a few business owners in the city. They continued to stage minor sit-ins at lunch counters whose owners' defied the city's new rule of desegregation, but after April 19 the Mayor was publicly on their side. The future still held “stand-ins” in Nashville's segregated movie theaters and “sleep-ins” in the lobbies of the city's hotels, but an important and enduring victory had been won. An unusually high number of NSM leaders, like Diane Nash, John Lewis, James Bevel, C.T. Vivian, and James Lawson, went on to become civil rights leaders at a national level through working with SNCC and the SCLC. Though much more work in America remained to be done, Nashville's students, along with their new-found adult supporters, demonstrated tremendous determination in the fight to desegregate Nashville's lunch counters.

By the time May 10 arrived, the vast majority of the once-hesitant black community supported the students' activities. NCLC leaders like Kelly Miller Smith used their position as

respected ministers and bridge leaders between the two generations to help adults contextualize students' seemingly radical new activities within the framework of respectability. By supporting the students, Smith helped to legitimize their course of action as well as women's more equal position within leadership ranks. Unable to completely step outside the discourses that surrounded them, sit-in participants were still subject to many ideas about respectability, and college campuses largely succeed in instilling middle-class values in their students. Like their parents, students understood their actions within the context of respectability. Young men and women, similar to the generation before them, believe their middle-class status made them entitled to first class American citizenship, and they fought for the ability to enjoy accompanying privileges. Students did not fully reject ideas about respectability present in the 1950s, but sought to expand its definition in a way that would result in quicker, more visible, progress towards racial equality.

Not exempt from these feelings, young black college women enthusiastically participated alongside black men in race uplift activities in unprecedented ways. Emboldened by the more egalitarian setting they found on college campuses, and encouraged by women activists they met at institutions like Highlander Center and Fisk's International House, young black women braved the physical and emotional abuse of white community members and joined men sitting-in. They actively voiced their opinions, served in leadership positions in the NSM, and encouraged fellow students during the formation of SNCC at Shaw University to break with adult leadership in order to be freer to formulate their own identity as an organization. Women were certainly aware of the drastic increases in the number of female college students over the previous decade, and perhaps accompanying these rising numbers they felt they inherited a duty to push forward and continue opening new opportunities for black women.

Like Nellie Hall and Frankie Keeling, college women encouraged each other to join the movement and supported each other through traumatic situations, like facing time in jail. They named the example of other young women participating in the sit-ins as the reason they joined--not the rhetoric or actions of male students, race leaders, or clergy. As demonstrated by Catherine Brooks, Angeline Butler, and Nellie Hall's feelings of unity as they watched Diane Nash assertively speak to Mayor West, women joined together to broaden the definition of respectability in the early months of 1960. The importance of NCLC leaders' rhetoric in encouraging adults to accept students' activities cannot be denied, but certainly adult black women felt pride as they watched young women aggressively fight for equality. Apprehension about the young women's new activities is understandable, but the fact that the United Church Women were the first adult group apart from the NCLC to issue their support comes as no surprise. Though many white women who later left the civil rights movement to join the ranks of second wave feminism claimed male race leaders dominated the movement, leaving women without power or any avenue of leadership, young black women in Nashville clearly demonstrated an inchoate feminism as they relied upon and encouraged each other to push the gendered boundaries of respectable race work.¹⁴² Four months after Nashville's first sit-in began on February 13, 1960 women were more active, vocal, and equal participants in the civil rights movement than ever before. Respectable race women no longer sat on the sidelines, they were in the midst of the action leading the way toward equality.

Notes

¹ Nellie Carter Hall, interview by Brian Piper, transcription by Carolyn James, 23 August 2003, Civil Rights Oral History Project, Nashville Public Library, 10.

² Ibid., 4.

³ I use the term “racial uplift” to reflect African-Americans’ group struggle against the racial barriers which prevent their social mobility and the enjoyment of rights associated with first-class citizen status. For many blacks, especially prior to the sit-in movement, uplift came to mean an emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority and the accumulation of wealth. “Race men” and “Race men” utilized uplift doctrine to fight for equality.

⁴ For discussion of African-American slaves using dominant discourses of respectability to attempt to gain equality and protection see Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999)

⁵ Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 30-35.

⁶ Bobby Lovett, *The Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 116.

⁷ “Nashville Christian Leadership Conference Mission Statement,” Box 37, Folder 12, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

⁸ “The Movement in Nashville, Tennessee,” Kelly Miller Smith’s notes, (Nashville Christian Leadership Conference, 1960), Box 35, Folder 7, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections, 2.

⁹ Kelly Miller Smith, “Day of Crisis,” (Unpublished Memoirs of his Movement Participation, 1961), Folder 1, Box 38, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections, 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹¹ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1989), 32.

¹² Lovett, 122.

¹³ John Lewis with Michael D’Orso, *Walking in the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon Schuster Inc., 1998), 71.

¹⁴ Ibid., 70.

¹⁵ Wallace Westerfeldt, “A Report on Nashville: Prepared for the Nashville Community Relations Conference,” June 1960, Box 37, Folder 1, Kelly Miller Smith Papers. Vanderbilt University Special Collections, 2.

¹⁶ Angeline Emma Butler, interview by Rachel Lawson, transcription by Carolyn James, 21 & 30 March 2002, Civil Rights Oral History Project, Nashville Public Library, 15.

¹⁷ David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Random House, 1998), 13

¹⁸ No newspaper accounts exists of the “trial sit-ins” in the *Nashville Tennessean*, *Nashville Banner* or *Nashville Globe* (the local black newspaper); See also Lovett, 27.

¹⁹ Branch, 271-273; Halberstam, 92-94.

²⁰ Smith, “Day of Crisis,” 5.

²¹ Ibid., 7.

²²“Rules of Action,” Folder 4, Box 14, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

²³Branch, 275.

²⁴ Sit-ins occurred on February 13, 18, 20, and 27, March 2 and 25, and April 23. See Lovett, 121-152 for detailed accounts of each sit-in.

²⁵ Peggy Alexander, Account of February Sit-ins, Box 2, Folder 1, Civil Rights Ephemera Collection, Nashville Public Library.

²⁶ Hall, 9.

²⁷ Catherine Burks Brooks, interview by K.G. Bennett, transcription by Carolyn James, 12 April 2004, Civil Rights Oral History Project, Nashville Public Library, 11.

²⁸ Eleanor Chippey-Grier, interviewed by K.G. Bennett, transcription by Carolyn James, 7 October 2002, Civil Rights Oral History Project, Nashville Public Library, 17.

²⁹ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening in the 1960s* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), 21.

³⁰ Lovett, 184.

³¹ Westerfeldt, “A Report on Nashville,” 15.

³² Smith, “Day of Crisis,” 20.

³³ Wallace Westerfeldt, “Settling a Sit-in: A Report Prepared for the Nashville Community Relation Conference,” February 1961, Box 37, Folder 1, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections, 6.

³⁴ “Students Refuse Bi-Racial Committee’s Proposal,” *Nashville Tennessean*, March 24, 1960, 3.

³⁵ Dorothy Brody to Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, 26 February 1960, Box 43, Folder 12, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

³⁶ Susan Brown to Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, 17 March 1960, Box 43, Folder 12, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

³⁷ Smith, “Day of Crisis,” 18.

³⁸ Lovett, 126.

³⁹ James Lawson, “What do Negro Students Want?,” 1959, Microfilm, Box 1, SNCC Papers, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

⁴⁰ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: The Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 121.

⁴¹ Will Sarvis, “Leaders in the Court and Community: Z. Alexander Looby, Avon N. Williams, Jr., and the Legal Fight for Civil Rights in Tennessee, 1940-1970,” *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 1 (Winter, 2003): 51.

⁴² Lovett, 98-121.

⁴³“1956 NAACP Membership,” “1957 NAACP Membership,” “1958 NAACP Membership,” “1959 NAACP Membership” and “1960 NAACP Membership,” Box 2, Folder 3, Z. Alexander Looby Papers, Fisk University Special Collections.

⁴⁴ “1958 NAACP Membership,” Box 2, Folder 3, Z. Alexander Looby Papers, Fisk University Special Collections.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “NAACP Minutes” (1956), Box 2, Folder 4, Z. Alexander Looby Papers, Fisk University Special Collections. See also Lovett 100, 116, 118-119.

⁴⁷ For more about women’s racial uplift work prior to the sit-in movement see: Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Rouse, and Barbara Woods, eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Joyce Ann Hanson, *Mary McLeod Bethune & Black Women's Political Activism* (Columbia : University of Missouri Press, 2003); Evelyn Higginbotham, “In Politics to Stay: Black Women Leaders and Party Politics in the 1920s,” in *Unequal Sisterhood: A multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, eds. Vicki L. Ruiz & Ellen DuBois, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge Press, 2000); “Stephanie J. Shaw, “Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women,” in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History*, eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed (New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1995)

⁴⁸ See Announcements in the *Nashville Globe*, 2 September 1951, 3 December 1953, 12 March 1956, 16 March 1956.

⁴⁹ “United Church Women Offer Support,” *Nashville Tennessean*, 1 September 1955, 4; “United Church Women Offer Support,” *Nashville Banner*, 1 September 1955.

⁵⁰ Lovett, 1; Fairclough 5-7.

⁵¹ Cynthia Fleming, personal conversation with author, University of Tennessee, 4 February, 2008.

⁵² Kevin Gates, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1-17.

⁵³ See for example of black respectability solely in reaction to white representations. Marisa Chappell, Jenny Hutchinson and Brian Ward, “‘Dress Modestly, neatly... as if you were going to church’: Respectability, Class and Gender in the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” in *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, eds. Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 69-101

⁵⁴ For further discussion see Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁵⁵ Chippey-Grier, 15.

⁵⁶ James West Davidson, *They Say: Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press 2007; Patricia A. Schechter, *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American reform, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁵⁷ Gaines, 15-17.

⁵⁸ Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 158.

⁵⁹ Kelly Miller Smith, "Black Religious Leadership: Nannie Helen Burroughs" Box 15, Folder 4, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt Special Collections, 1-3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.

⁶¹ For further discussion about cross-class adherence to middle-class respectability see Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1886-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

⁶² David E. Summers, "The Local Press and the Nashville Student Movement, 1960" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1989), 138-140.

⁶³ Lovett, 56-62; Summers 157-160.

⁶⁴ *Nashville Globe*, 17 February, 1956.

⁶⁵ "Ladies' Column," *Nashville Globe*, 5 August, 1956.

⁶⁶ Chappell, Hutchinson & Ward, 94.

⁶⁷ Ruth Collins, "Ladies' Column: How to Put a Fitted Sheet on Mattress," *Nashville Globe*, 1 August, 1956; Cindy White, "Ladies' Column: Beauty Tips," *Nashville Globe*, 9 September 1956.

⁶⁸ Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 6-8.

⁶⁹ Butler, 9.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁷¹ Hall, 6.

⁷² Butler, 48.

⁷³ See Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). She argues that students' choice to protest lunch counters and departments can be seen as outgrowth of consumer culture's ability to convince Americans that power is tied to the ability to buy.

⁷⁴ For more discussion of the impact of pictures on the success of the civil rights movement see Chappell, Hutchinson & Ward, "'Dress Modestly, neatly... as if you were going to church'"

⁷⁵ Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 127; "Four Freedom Riders," *Time*, 2 June 1961, 17; "Fisk University Coed Plans Lifetime Fight with Jim Crow," *Jet* 9, June 1960; Lewis and D'Orso, 91.

⁷⁶ Chippey-Grier, 20.

⁷⁷ Carson, 12.

⁷⁸ "Fisk Coed Tells of Day in Jail," *Nashville Tennessean* Aug 25, 1960

⁷⁹ Hall, 15.

⁸⁰ Brooks, 19.

⁸¹ Butler, 43.

⁸² Ibid., 61.

⁸³ Marybeth Gasman, *Envisioning Black Colleges: A History of the United Negro College Fund* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 51-64.

⁸⁴ Data compiled from Fisk University, *The 1945 Yearbook; The 1946 Yearbook; The 1947 Yearbook; The 1948 Yearbook; The 1949 Yearbook; The 1950 Yearbook* (Nashville: Midtown Press), Fisk University Special Collections.

⁸⁵ Data compiled from Fisk University, *The 1955 Yearbook; The 1956 Yearbook; The 1957 Yearbook; The 1958 Yearbook; The 1959 Yearbook; The 1960 Yearbook* (Nashville: Midtown Press), Fisk University Special Collections.

⁸⁶ Data compiled from Fisk University, *The 1959 Yearbook; The 1960 Yearbook* (Nashville: Midtown Press), Fisk University Special Collections.

⁸⁷ Butler, 13.

⁸⁸ Aldon D. Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1984), 140-142.

⁸⁹ Miles Horton, quoted in "27th Annual Highlander Report," 1 October, 1958, Box 3, Folder 12, Carl & Anne Braden Papers. University of Tennessee Special Collections.

⁹⁰ Septima Clark, "Report of the 6th Annual Highlander Folk School College Workshop," March 31 1- April 2, 1959. Box 5, Folder 1, Highlander Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives, 1.

⁹¹ Butler, 12.

⁹² Ibid., 13.

⁹³ Hall, 16.

⁹⁴ Lovett, 127.

⁹⁵ Summers, 146.

⁹⁶ Nash is mentioned in: "98 Per Cent of Accused in Sit-Ins Non-Nashvillians," *Nashville Banner*, 11 April 1960; Vernon Louviere, "Red, Sit-in Link Charge Denied," *Nashville Tennessean*, 15 April 1960; "Students Stage 5 Sit-ins Here," *Nashville Banner*, 3 May 1960; "6 Sit-in Participants Driven Off With Rifle," *Nashville Tennessean*, 13 May 1960. Her looks are specifically mentioned in: "Negroes Ask Counters Shut During Truce," *Nashville Banner*, 3 March 1960; David Halberstam, "Negro Sit-ins to Resume Here," *Nashville Tennessean*, 30 March 1960, 4; Jack Setters, "County Bi-Racial Group Proposal Ok'd by Smith," *Nashville Banner*, 7 April 1960. "Merchants, Negro Leaders to Discuss Plan Saturday," *Nashville Banner*, 8 April 1960; "Fisk Coed Tells of Day in Jail," *Nashville Tennessean*, 25 April 1960.

⁹⁷ Higginbotham, 192.

⁹⁸ Righteous, 7.

⁹⁹ See Gilmore for further discussion.

¹⁰⁰ For further analysis of bridge leaders see Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Robnett defines “bridge leaders” as those who “foster ties between the social movement and the community; and between the prefigurative strategies and political strategies. They are able to cross the boundaries between the public life of a movement organization and the private sphere of adherents and potential constituents,” 19.

¹⁰¹ David Halberstam, “Negro Sit-ins to Resume Here,” *Nashville Tennessean*, 30 March 1960, 4.

¹⁰² Carson, 11.

¹⁰³ “Sunday March 10 [1960],” Box 38, Folder 7, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt Special Collections.

¹⁰⁴ Kelly Miller Smith, “Capital Hill First Baptist Church Bulletin,” 17 April, Box 39, Folder 10, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

¹⁰⁵ Smith, “Day of Crisis,” 18.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Kelly Miller Smith, quoted in Wallace Westfeldt, “A Report on Nashville: Prepared for the Nashville Community Relations Conference,” 12 December 1961, p. 7, Box 6, Folder 12, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, “Day of Crisis,” 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Kelly Miller Smith, “Capital Hill First Baptist Church Bulletin,” 10 March 1960, Box 39, Folder 10, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

¹¹¹ Diane Nash, quoted in Carson, 18.

¹¹² Diane Nash, as quoted in Juan Williams with the Eyes on the Prize Production Team, *Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years, 1954-1964* (New York: Viking Press, 1987), 131.

¹¹³ Butler, 49.

¹¹⁴ Robin D.G. Kelly in *Black Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000) claims black women would take this holistic vision of emancipation with them as they began participation in the black feminist movement.

¹¹⁵ Cynthia Griggs Fleming, “Black Women and Black Power: The Case of Ruby Dorris Smith Robinson and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee,” in *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, eds. Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 204-205).

¹¹⁶ “United Church Women Offer Support,” *Nashville Tennessean*, 28 March 1960; “United Church Women Offer Support,” *Nashville Banner*, 28 March 1960.

¹¹⁷ Peggy Alexander, “Story of Desegregation in Nashville,” Box 2, Folder 2, Civil Rights Ephemera Collection, Nashville Public Library.

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¹¹⁹ Westerfeldt, “A Report on Nashville,” 6.

¹²⁰ Vivian Henderson, quoted in “A Report on Nashville,” 6.

¹²¹ Kelly Miller Smith, “April 2, 1960 [Sermon],” Box 35, Folder 10, Kelly Miller Smith Papers, Vanderbilt University Special Collections.

¹²² Smith, “Day of Crisis,” 6.

¹²³ Diane Nash, quoted in “The New Generation Fights for Equality: Report of the 7th Annual Highlander Folk School College Workshop, April 1-3, 1960,” Box 5, Folder 1, Highlander Papers, Tennessee State Library and Archives.

¹²⁴ Carson, 20-22.

¹²⁵ For further discussion of Ella Baker’s involvement in the creation of SNCC see: Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

¹²⁶ Butler, 47.

¹²⁷ Juan Williams with the Eyes on the Prize Production Team, 138-139.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹²⁹ Westerfeldt, “Settling a Sit-in,” 7.

¹³⁰ Sarvis, 52.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹³² Church Service Directory and News Journal, “Z. Alexander Looby Champion of Justice” Box 6, Folder 9, Z. Alexander Papers, Fisk University Special Collections.

¹³³ As quoted in Sarvis, 58.

¹³⁴ “Mayor Says Integrate Counters,” *Nashville Tennessean*, 20 April 1960.

¹³⁵ Brooks, 25.

¹³⁶ Butler, 42.

¹³⁷ Hall, 13.

¹³⁸ Carrie Gentry, interview by Andrea Blackman, transcription by Carolyn James, 21 May 2004 & 23 June 2004, Civil Rights Oral History Project, Nashville Public Library, 16.

¹³⁹ Westerfeldt, “Settling a Sit-in,” 8.

¹⁴⁰ Benjamin Pitts quoted in Westerfeldt, “Setting a Sit-in,” 6.

¹⁴¹ Halberstam, 157.

¹⁴² See Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: The Dial Press, 1999); Sarah Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

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